

# A Collection of Individual Research Projects

Researched and Written by the Members of the  
Masters in Teaching Program 2008 Cohort

During Winter Quarter 2008

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## Forward

The 36 papers that comprise this book are the collective work of students in the middle of the second year of their rigorous two-year Masters Degree/Teacher Certification Program. This book was written at a point in the program when students were between two full-time student teaching experiences. The purpose of the project that culminated with this book was to give students opportunities to learn more about topics that were particularly relevant to their development as teachers in light of needs and interests that emerged during their first student teaching experiences. Each student was asked to individually select a topic that was highly interesting and very relevant to her/his future teaching and to prepare a summative paper to share the results with present and future colleagues.

Students were encouraged to use whatever sources were most appropriate to their topics: including research articles from professional journals, articles from non-research journals, books, teacher interviews, and classroom observations. The students and faculty met regularly throughout the quarter in seminar format to share progress, consult with each other, and to give and receive formative feedback.

In addition to these papers, students also prepared and taught 30 minute lessons related to their chosen topics, as an additional way of sharing insights gained from their research. This peer teaching experience was one of the culminating events of the quarter, a time dedicated to reflection on recent practice and preparation for a second student teaching experience and soon-to-follow first year of teaching. These lessons were taught during a two day conference, on March 3 and 4, 2008.

I would like to acknowledge the many hours of work the students put into this project and confess my own satisfaction in seeing them demonstrate, through their enthusiastic effort and significant learning, the importance of interest in education. As editor, I also would like to dedicate this book to the children and adolescents who will be in front of these soon-to-be-certificated teachers, since they are the ones, unseen though they may be now, who have been the true inspiration behind all the efforts being made by students and faculty during this project and throughout the past two years. Finally, I want to thank my colleagues, Jacque Ensign and Gery Gerst for so beautifully exemplifying, in their work with these future teachers and with me, what it means to be collaborative, student-centered, and anchored in the ideal of social justice.

Scott Coleman  
February 29, 2008

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## **Sing and Shout: Music in the Elementary Classroom**

Stacee Anderson

“Ah, music. A magic beyond all we do here!”

J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, 1997

People throughout time have recognized the importance of music. It's often a manifestation of the human spirit, similar to language. Some of music's greatest practitioners have evoked emotions not possible to say in any other language. I have enjoyed playing the piano for the past 30 years and have given private piano lessons for 12 years. I have also enjoyed participating in choirs and community singing. I have attended numerous musical events and have always been amazed at the feeling that music evokes.

### **The Benefits of Music and Song**

Since starting the Master in Teaching program I have been interested in the use of music and songs in the classroom. I have read a number of reports that attest to the connection between music and academic achievement. One study was conducted with fourteen year-old students in seventeen countries. All the countries include music throughout the curriculum from kindergarten through high school. The academic achievement of the Hungarian students, especially in math and science, was outstanding (Dickinson, 1993). The Netherlands began their music program in 1968, and Japan followed suit by learning from the experience of other countries. The academic success in these countries is phenomenal.

A study at Strathclyde University shows that brainpower increases when students are listening to music. This study indicates that playing the latest popular songs in a classroom may increase students' academic achievement (Gregory & Chapman, 2007). The research was conducted after Russian studies showed that medical patients recovered more quickly when they listened to music.

Another report revealed that the schools who produced the highest academic achievement in the United States today are spending 20 to 30% of the day on the arts, with special emphasis on music. One of these schools, St. Augustine Bronx Elementary School, was about to fail in 1984 and then implemented an intensive music program. Today 90% of the students are reading at or above grade level. Other reports show the Davidson School in Augusta, Georgia (grades 5-12), which began its music and arts program in 1981, as rated number one academically in the country (Brown, 1997).

The research from the cognitive sciences gives useful information to explain these connections. Brain imaging techniques can show the process of thinking. MRI's have shown that when people listen to melodies with a variety of pitch and timbre, the right hemisphere of the brain is activated. It also “lights up” when people play music by ear. When, however, people learn to read music, understand key signatures, notation, and other details of scores, and are able to follow the sequence of notes, then the left hemisphere “lights up” (Nakada, 1998). Significantly, it is activated in the same area that is involved in analytical and mathematical thinking.

I found the research reports interesting, but further clarification has come through interviewing parents. When parents think of the “good things in life” that they would like their children to experience in school, they include music and art. Many are not quite sure what these subjects can do for children, but they intuitively feel the need for the added dimension that these subjects bring to the classroom.

Music has often been taught as if it was different, something outside the mainstream curriculum and is often subject to cutbacks. The pressure on elementary schools to show progress under the No Child Left Behind Act has caused many districts to reduce or eliminate music in the schools. A report by the Center on Educational Policy shows that some school districts have increased math and reading time by as much as 150 minutes per day while decreasing the time for music by one-third (Ruma, 2008).

Finally, in my own life of raising a family, I have seen the influences of music and song. Children have a musical vitality that is demonstrated at an early age. From bouncing a baby rhythmically on my lap to humming a soft lullaby, music and song have been influential in child rearing. I have been astounded at how quickly a child can learn a song and how the memory often lasts for years. I have also seen the effects of music in community classes that I have taught. Music seems to have a lasting effect because it draws on emotions. Studies have also shown that the use of music can produce better listeners (Brown, 1997). Most children enjoy participating in activities that involve music. I have never met a Cub Scout that doesn't like singing a silly song. The rhythms often help children remember what they sing and the message of the words. I have used songs frequently for activities such as transition time, teaching a concept, and celebrations.

My research indicates that there is limited time for music and songs in the classroom with pressures placed on teachers and administrators to “teach the academics.” I believe there is a place for music as it is incorporated right into the learning of reading, math, science, and social studies. Ruth Dickinson supports the use of music and the arts in the classroom. Her research suggests the importance of learning songs in the classroom for the following reasons (Dickinson, 1993):

1. Music is a language that all people speak. It crosses racial, cultural, social, educational, and economic barriers. It enhances cultural appreciation and awareness.
2. Music and song contain symbols that are as important as numbers and letters.
3. Songs merge the learning of process and content.
4. Songs can improve the academic achievement of students. They enhance test scores, attitudes, social skills, critical and creative thinking.
5. Music and song are essential components of many alternative assessment programs.
6. Music and song require Bloom's higher order thinking skills including analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.
7. Music and song integrate mind, body, and spirit.
8. Music and song provide opportunities for self-expression.
9. Music and song develop independence and collaboration.
10. Music and song provide the means for every child to learn.

During my student teaching I was looking forward to using music and song in the curriculum. I knew music could be played to enhance student work time. I was familiar with the concrete ways songs can help teach fractions, multiplication, days of the week, and other mathematical concepts. I was also familiar with the use of music, songs, and rhythms to understand other cultures. I looked forward to incorporating music into my curriculum.

### **Problems to Overcome**

I found several problems with using music and songs in my lessons. First, I often did not have the resources I needed to use music and song. The first item I was lacking was a collection of songs with their intended learning outcomes available. During my student teaching many times I found opportunities where a song would have enhanced learning experience. Often, I did not have quick access to an applicable song and by the time I found it (generally a day or two later) the teaching moment was gone. If I had a collection and index of songs the problem would have been alleviated. Another problem was the necessity for the songs to be in categories. When springtime arrived, if the songs were in categories, it would be simple to open the “Seasons” category and choose a song that would be appropriate for the class.

I also felt a song collection would be helpful if the lyrics were sung to a familiar melody or a melody that is easy to learn. The internet has many songs available for a variety of subjects to be taught. The problem is that these songs are generally an unfamiliar melody (although often quite a “catchy” tune) and only offered at a price. I was looking for “free” songs that I could sing without listening to a CD or sitting down at the piano to figure out the melody. I wanted songs that were sung to already known melodies.

I interviewed several teachers at elementary schools in the Olympia School District. I found that music was often used in the classroom, but the teacher’s had few songs that were to familiar melodies. Nancy Spohn, of Pioneer Elementary school, expressed that music was an integral part of her Kindergarten classroom especially in transition time (personal communication, January 25, 2008).

### **The Process**

I first set out looking for songs on the internet. I found many teacher/song websites, but the majority of songs were to unfamiliar melodies. I was looking for songs that I could teach quickly with little or no rehearsing. I found one extremely useful website (<http://www.canteach.ca>) that had a variety of songs and poems with many of the lyrics set to familiar melodies. This website contains songs that others have contributed to, many of them teachers.

Next, I wanted to add autoharp and guitar chords to the songs. The autoharp is an instrument that most children can easily learn to play (and feel successful) in a short amount of time. My autoharp was purchased in used condition at [www.ebay.com](http://www.ebay.com) for \$100. The chords are similar to what would be strummed on the guitar. I felt it would be useful to have the chords written on the songs. This was a little more challenging than I anticipated. Most of the “familiar” melodies were not difficult to find the chords for, but many of them were in a key much too high for me to sing comfortably. I spent considerable time transposing melodies to a lower key.

As I worked on autoharp chords, I realized I wanted all of the children to be able to participate with an instrument. I wanted all children to feel included in the process, but what if one were playing the autoharp? Were there other instruments the other children could play? I decided that percussion or rhythm instruments would be best. A percussion instrument is any object which produces a sound by being hit with an implement, shaken, rubbed, scraped, or other actions which set the object into vibration. Some percussion instrument ideas that came to mind were: cymbals, castanets, sleigh bells, rattles, tambourines, rhythm sticks, drums, triangles, sanding blocks and maracas. I decided to make rhythm sticks, rattles, bells, and sanding blocks. The rhythm sticks are a twist on the rhythm sticks that Australian Aborigines use in ceremonial dances. I used decorated pain stirrers that the children can clap together in time to the music. The rattles are made from plastic eggs filled partially with wheat and taped shut. The bells are put on pipe cleaners. The sanding blocks are painted scraps of wood with sandpaper wrapped around the middle. I also own a musical triangle and pipe chimes. In the future I would like to add castanets and maracas to my percussion instrument collection. I felt the additional rhythm instruments I assembled would give each child an opportunity to participate in the songs more fully. I will not use instruments for every song taught, however, but they will be useful.

Next I wanted the songs to be accessible. It seemed the easiest way for me to retrieve the songs would be in a binder. I put the songs in the following categories:

- Animals and insects
- Celebrations
- Colors
- Earth
- Family and friends
- Food
- Holidays
- Math
- Openings/closings and action
- Reading
- Science and social studies
- Seasons
- Transportation

I placed the songs in individual plastic sleeves and created a table of contents. The table of contents has the songs in alphabetical order within categories. I felt this would be an easy way to find an appropriate song, retrieve it quickly, and pull it out (for copying or playing with an instrument). I also created an alphabetical index at the back of the portfolio (see appendix A).

Another challenge I found in this learning process was finding songs I felt embraced other cultures. I had a classmate point out that all the melodies I was using were “white, middle-class” tunes such as, *Wheels on the Bus*, *Old MacDonald*, and *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star*. I felt my classmate was correct, but I also realized I needed a melody that I could quickly teach the children in my classroom. One benefit to using these simple melodies is that they are rhythmic and repetitive, making them easy to learn. I looked for songs from other cultures and was pleased to find some African chants. I also speak a little rudimentary Spanish and so I translated a few songs from English to Spanish. I recognize that all songs are “multicultural” in that they cross cultural lines with rhythms, timing, and often the introduction of ideas that are new to the listener. In the future, however, I would like additional songs, chants or rhythms that involve other cultures and countries.

## Sample Songs

Please utilize the full collection of songs in Appendix B.

## Reflection

The finding and learning the songs has been an educational process. I have been amazed at the lack of “free” songs on the internet and in books. It would be difficult to institute music and songs in the curriculum if the teacher had to pay for access to each song. The songs and chants I did find gave me new ideas on how to implement music in lesson plans. This project also helped me to see that music and songs are universal and need to be inclusive of all cultures.

Learning the autoharp chords was not a difficult task in this project, but creating percussion instruments for all the students took some testing. For example, I tried several different containers for the rattles and found that a plastic egg gives the best sound without being overbearing.

Creating lesson plans was a great learning experience for me in this project. As I found each individual song I could visualize immediately where I would use it. For example, *The Contraction Song* would quickly introduce contractions, how they are formed, and where they are found. I could see a mini-lesson plan from each of the songs I put in the portfolio. Creating the longer full-length lessons (see appendix C) was another learning opportunity for me. I thought through the entire lesson plan, including the EALR’s the lesson would cover. As I continue to work on this project it would be beneficial to have the EALR’(s) listed at the top of each song and in the index.

This project has allowed me to explore the connection between songs and learning. I realize the benefits that songs can bring to the learning process and assist in meeting a standards-based education. I hope to add to my portfolio of songs and utilize them in my future teaching experiences.

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## **Appendices**

Appendix A: Two Lesson Plans: Teaching Rhyming; Patterns with Bingo Math

Appendix B: Songs (extensive & organized)

### Appendix A

#### A-Hunting We Will Go: Teaching Rhyming Through Musical Verse

##### Overview

This lesson is most appropriate for second graders, but can be adapted for kindergarten or first graders. The activity begins with the singing of the song "A-Hunting We Will Go" with its original verses and several new verses that support rhyming concepts. Students brainstorm pairs of rhyming words and create their own verses for the song. The activity culminates with the practice of rhyming skills using an online interactive tool.

##### **Student Objectives**

- \* Identify rhyming words
- \* Brainstorm rhyming words
- \* Create song verses (as a class or individually)
- \* Practice rhyming using an online interactive tool

##### **Reading EALR's: 1.1, 1.3**

### **Instructional Plan**

#### **Preparation**

Familiarize yourself with the melody and words to the song "A-Hunting We Will Go."  
Make copies of Verse Frame handout

#### **Instruction and Activities**

Introducing rhyming words through music

1. Begin the lesson by teaching students to sing the song "A-Hunting We Will Go."  
  
(To the tune, "The Farmer in the Dell")  
Oh, a-hunting we will go, a-hunting we will go.  
We'll take a fox and put in a box

And then we'll let it go.

I like to change the verse to:

Oh, a-walking we will go, a-walking we will go,  
We'll take a fox and put in a box  
And then we'll let it go.

2. Ask students to identify the two words that sound the same in the song (fox and box). Continue to sing the song with the following phrases to replace the second line. As you sing the song, pause for the second rhyming word and allow students to sing the word they think rhymes. This should be easy and fun for students.

We'll take a whale and put in a pail  
We'll take a frog and put on a log  
We'll take a fish and put on a dish

3. Allow students to sing the song together several more times using both the original lyrics and the three new verses.
4. Ask students to brainstorm other animals that could be used in the song. List these animals on chart paper. Then ask students to think of words that rhyme with each animal name. For example:

snake: lake, cake, rake  
bear: hair, dare, chair  
cat: hat, mat

5. Model for students how these words can be used to create new verses of the song. For example:

We'll take a snake and put in a lake  
We'll take a bear and hug if we dare  
We'll take a cat and put on a mat

6. Next, write the following verse frame on chart paper or an overhead transparency.

Oh, a-hunting (a-walking) we will go, a-hunting (a-walking) we will go.  
We'll take a \_\_\_\_\_ and put in a \_\_\_\_\_  
and then we'll let it go.

7. Invite students to choose one of the animal names from the brainstorming list and one of the rhyming words. Write these words in the blanks of the verse frame.
8. For additional practice, instruct students to make their own lists of animal names and rhyming words.

9. Provide each student with the Verse Frame handout. Ask each student to create two or three verses to the song by writing pairs of rhyming words in the blanks.
10. Once they have completed their verses, gather the students together and allow them to share them. Sing the verses together as a class.

***Verse Frame***

**Fill in the blanks with rhyming words to  
complete each verse**

*Oh, a walking we will go,*

*a walking we will go,*

*we'll take a \_\_\_\_\_*

*and put in a \_\_\_\_\_*

*and then we'll let it go.*

---

*Oh, a walking we will go,*

*a walking we will go,*

*we'll take a \_\_\_\_\_*

*and put in a \_\_\_\_\_*

*and then we'll let it go.*

## Patterns with “Bingo” (Math)

### *Learning Objectives*

Students will be able to:

- \* recognize an auditory pattern
- \* make two-dimensional patterns on a grid

*Math EALR’s: 1.4, 1.5, 3.2, 4.2, 5.1*

### *Instructional Plan*

Begin this lesson by singing the song Bingo. Explain that each time the students sing the song, they will replace one more letter in the dog’s name with a clap. Discuss the patterns in this song.

Next distribute to each student and have them write their names in one of the  $10 \times 10$  grids, starting in the top left square. (You may cut the grid into a  $10 \times 5$  grid for younger students.) After they have printed their name once, have the students continue writing it starting in the very next square until the grid is full. The example below shows how the grid would be completed for the name SARA.

Allow students to color their name patterns according to the following directions. As you read the directions out loud, you should also demonstrate the process with a sample grid.

- \* Choose a crayon for the first letter of your name. Color the first box.
- \* Color each box in which that letter appears with the same color. For example, if the first letter of your name is A, all the boxes with the letter A will be the same color.
- \* Choose a different color for the next box that is not colored already. Color all the boxes with that letter the second color.
- \* Continue in this way until all the boxes are colored.

Now call on a volunteer to describe the grid pattern which he or she colored. For the name SARA, the pattern is ABCB. Ask students to describe any other patterns they see on the grid. Ask if anyone else’s grid had the same pattern. (It is important to emphasize that students did not have to use the exact same colors to have the same pattern as someone else. For instance, red-blue-green is the same as yellow-orange-brown in terms of a pattern core.) Then ask for students who have other patterns to show their grids. Suggest the students sort the grids by taping the grids with identical patterns in a column to make a bar graph. (Mai, Nya, and Sam will have identical patterns as will Eddy, Anne, and Soon.) Ask the students where Bingo’s grid would go. (Teacher note: It might be

interesting to have students complete this activity with different size grids and compare the patterns.

Name patterns make a great bulletin board display. Cut out the grids and mount them on black construction paper to make the colors stand out.

### ***Questions for Students***

What patterns are in the song Bingo?

[The pattern changes each time we sing the song. The first pattern is ABCDE. When we clap, the patterns are ABCDE, AABCD, AAABC, AAAAB, and AAAAA.]

What would Bingo's name pattern look like?

[Bingo's pattern would be ABCDE.]

Who in the class would have the same name pattern as Bingo?

[Answers will vary, but possible names are Ringo, Marge, Micah, Myrna, Pablo, Izhak, and any other name with five different letters.]

Which words on our word wall would have the same grid pattern as Amy? As Yanna?

[Answers will vary.]

Does your name pattern change when you use a different size grid?

[The pattern going up and down (in columns) changes, but my name pattern stays the same.]

### **Assessment Options**

1. Collect students' name pattern activity sheets.
2. Have students change their names into auditory or kinesthetic patterns. They can write or perform these patterns. Take note of which students are able to do this independently.

**Table of Contents for Songs**  
**(Alphabetical order within categories)**

**Animals and Insects**

Ants  
Bugs  
Bugs Come out in Spring  
(The) Butterfly Song  
Do You Like to Buzz?  
Farmer McDonald  
Five Little Ladybugs (Finger Play)  
(The) Fuzzy Caterpillar  
I'm a Little Honeybee

**Celebrations**

100 Days Song  
Birthdays

**Colors**

Color Song  
If Your Clothes Have Any Color (with Spanish)

**Earth**

(The) Family of the Sun  
Growth of a Tree  
I'm a Little Seed  
This Old Earth  
Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

**Working on the Trash**

**Family and Friends**

Cousins are Cozy  
Friend of Mine  
Here we are Together  
You Are My Best Friend

**Food**

Apple  
Applesauce  
Cooking Stone Soup

**Eat Them To Be Lean**

Food in my Tummy  
Hug Sandwich  
Pumpkins in my Garden  
Vegetables  
We're Going to Make a Cake  
Where Is My Gingerbread Girl/Boy

**Holidays**

Albuquerque Turkey  
Chinese Dragon  
Chinese New Year  
Fine Little Turkeys (Finger Play)  
Halloween is Coming Soon  
I'm a Little Groundhog  
Martin Luther King, Jr. (Chant)  
My Dreidel  
(The) Reindeer Pokey  
Shadow Time on Ground Hog's Day  
Three Little Witches  
Three Valentines  
Turkey Trouble  
Valentine's Day

**Math**

Clock Song  
Days of the Week (with Spanish)  
Months of the Year (with Spanish)  
(A) Penny is One Cent (Finger Play)  
Shape Song  
(The) Skip Count Song  
Zero the Hero

### **Openings/Closings & Action**

Chinese Hello Song  
Fun to Do  
Good Morning Song  
Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes (with Spanish)  
Here we Come Just A-Walkin'  
If You're Happy and You Know It  
Jump, Jump in Class  
Make a Circle  
(The) More We get Together  
See You Later Alligator (Poem)

### **Reading**

Adjective, Noun, Verb Song  
(The) Contraction Song  
Letters  
Old Macdonald's Vowel Song  
Punctuation Marks  
Reading Strategies Song  
Two Vowels Together  
Vowels

### **Science and Social Studies**

#### **Are Your Teeth Clean and White**

#### **(The) Dendrite Song**

#### **(The) Fifty States in Rhyme**

#### **I'm Full of Bones**

I've Been Brushing  
I've Been Working on my Neurons

### **Seasons**

Five Little Inuit (Finger Play)  
Goodbye Winter  
Hello Spring  
(The) Leaves are Falling Down  
(The) Leaves of the Trees  
November  
Seasons of the Year  
Snowflakes  
(The) Snowman  
Springtime

Thunder and Lightning  
Water Cycle  
Weather Song  
Where Is the Rain (African Chant)  
Winter, Spring, Summer, Fall

### **Transportation**

Vusi Drives the Kombi (African Chant)  
Walking Through Africa (African Chant)

### **Traditional Songs with Chords**

Bingo  
Clementine ( In a Cavern )  
(The) Farmer in the Dell  
Here We Go 'Round the Mulberry Bush  
Hokey Pokey  
I'm a Little Teapot  
I've Been Working on the Railroad  
(The) Itsy-Bitsy Spider  
London Bridge  
Mary Had a Little Lamb  
(The) Muffin Man  
Old MacDonald Had A Farm  
Pop Goes the Weasel  
Row, Row, Row your Boat  
This Old Man  
Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star  
(The) Wheels on the Bus  
Where is Thumbkin? (Frere Jacques)  
Yankee Doodle



## Alphabetical Index of Songs

<b>Song</b>	<b>Category</b>
100 Days Song	celebrations
Adjective, Noun, Verb Song	reading
Albuquerque Turkey	holidays
Ants	animals and insects
Apple	food
Applesauce	food
Are Your Teeth Clean and White	science/soc. studies
Bingo	traditional songs
Birthdays	celebrations
Bugs Come out in Spring	animals and insects
Bugs	animals and insects
Butterfly Song	animals and insects
Chinese Dragon	holidays
Chinese Hello Song	open/close/action
Chinese New Year	holidays
Clementine ( In a Cavern )	traditional songs
Clock Song	math
Color Song	colors
Contraction Song	reading
Cooking Stone Soup	food
Cousins are Cozy	family and friends
Days of the Week (with Spanish)	math
Dendrite Song	science/soc. studies
Do You Like to Buzz?	animals and insects
Eat Them To Be Lean	food
Family of the Sun	earth
Farmer in the Dell	traditional songs
Farmer McDonald	animals and insects
Fifty States in Rhyme	science/soc. studies
Fine Little Turkeys (Finger Play)	holidays
Five Little Inuit (Finger Play)	seasons
Five Little Ladybugs (Finger Play)	animals and insects
Food in my Tummy	food
Friend of Mine	family and friends
Fun to Do	open/close/action
Fuzzy Caterpillar	animals and insects
Good Morning Song	open/close/action
Goodbye Winter	seasons
Growth of a Tree	earth
Halloween is Coming Soon	holidays
Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes (with Spanish)	open/close/action
Hello Spring	seasons

Here we are Together	family and friends
Here we Come Just A-Walkin’	open/close/action
Here We Go ‘Round the Mulberry Bush	traditional songs
Hokey Pokey	traditional songs
Hug Sandwich	food
I’m a Little Groundhog	holidays
I’m a Little Honeybee	animals and insects
I’m a Little Seed	earth
I’m Full of Bones	science/soc. studies
I’ve Been Brushing	science/soc. studies
I’ve Been Working on my Neurons	science/soc. studies
I’ve Been Working on the Railroad	traditional songs
If You’re Happy and You Know It	open/close/action
If Your Clothes Have Any Color (with Spanish)	colors
I’m a Little Teapot	traditional songs
Itsy-Bitsy Spider	traditional songs
Jump, Jump in Class	open/close/action
Leaves are Falling Down	seasons
Leaves of the Trees	seasons
Letters reading	reading
London Bridge	traditional songs
Make a Circle	open/close/action
Martin Luther King, Jr. (Chant)	holidays
Mary Had a Little Lamb	traditional songs
Months of the Year (with Spanish)	math
More We get Together	open/close/action
Muffin Man	traditional songs
My Dreidel	holidays
November	seasons
Old MacDonald Had A Farm	traditional songs
Old Macdonald’s Vowel Song	reading
(B) Penny is One Cent (Finger Play)	math
Pop Goes the Weasel	traditional songs
Pumpkins in my Garden	food
Punctuation Marks	reading
Reading Strategies Song	reading
Reduce, Reuse, Recycle	earth
Reindeer Pokey	holidays
Row, Row, Row your Boat	traditional songs
Seasons of the Year	seasons
See You Later Alligator (Poem)	open/close/action
Shadow Time on Ground Hog’s Day	holidays
Shape Song	math
Skip Count Song	math
Snowflakes	seasons
Snowman	seasons

Springtime	seasons
This Old Earth	earth
This Old Man	traditional songs
Three Little Witches	holidays
Three Valentines	holidays
Thunder and Lightning	seasons
Turkey Trouble	holidays
Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star	traditional songs
Two Vowels Together	reading
Valentine's Day	holidays
Vegetables	food
Vowels	reading
Vusi Drives the Kombi (African Chant)	transportation
Walking Through Africa (African Chant)	transportation
Water Cycle	seasons
We're Going to Make a Cake	food
Weather Song	seasons
Wheels on the Bus	traditional songs
Where Is My Gingerbread Girl/Boy	food
Where Is the Rain (African Chant)	seasons
Where is Thumbkin? (Frere Jacques)	traditional songs
Winter, Spring, Summer, Fall	seasons
Working on the Trash	earth
Yankee Doodle	traditional songs
You Are My Best Friend	family and friends
Zero the Hero	math



## Songs

### *Animals and Insects*

#### *Ants*

(To the tune of "Oh My Darling")

C C

#### **It's an insect not a spider**

G G  
It has 6 legs instead of 8

G C  
3 on this side 3, on that side

G7 G C  
And it's crawling on your plate.

#### **Bugs Come Out In Spring**

(To the tune of "When the Saints Come Marching In")

G G  
Oh when the bugs come out in spring

G D7  
Oh when the bugs come out in spring

G C  
I want to be outside watching

G D7 G  
When the bugs come out in spring

I'll see some crawl; I'll see some fly  
I'll count how many go marching by  
I'll watch and see how many I know  
Of the bugs that come out in spring.

#### **Bugs**

(To the tune of "When the Saints Go Marching In")

G G  
Oh, when the bugs go marching in,

G D7  
Oh, when the bugs go marching in,

G G C  
Oh, how I'll see the ants and the beetles,

G D7 G

Oh, when the bugs go marching in.  
Oh, when the bugs begin to crawl,  
Oh, when the bugs begin to crawl,  
Oh, how I'll see the roaches and termites,  
Oh, when the bugs begin to crawl.

Oh, when the bugs come flying in,  
Oh, when the bugs come flying in,  
Oh, how I'll see the moths and mosquitoes,  
Oh, when the bugs come flying in.

Oh, when the bugs begin to buzz,  
Oh, when the bugs begin to buzz,  
Oh, how I'll hear the bees and cicadas,  
Oh, when the bugs begin to buzz.

Oh, when the bugs begin to leap,  
Oh, when the bugs begin to leap,  
Oh, how I'll see the fleas and the crickets,  
Oh, when the bugs begin to leap!

Meish Goldish

### **Do You Like To Buzz?**

(To the tune of "Do Your Ears Hang Low?")

          C      C  
Do you like to buzz,  
          C          C  
Are you covered all in fuzz?  
          C          C  
Do you call a hive a home  
          G7                  G7  
In the Garden where you roam?  
          C          C  
Do you make a lot of honey,  
          C          C  
Are your stripes a little funny?  
          C  G7  C  
Do you like to buzz?

### **Farmer McDonald**

(Partially to the tune, "Old McDonald")

G          C      G

Old McDonald had a goat,  
G D7 G  
It ate his winter overcoat.

Old McDonald had a sheep,  
It ate his big, red, four-wheeled jeep.

Old McDonald had a cat,  
It ate his furry, winter hat.

Old McDonald had a goose,  
It ate his can of apple juice.

Old McDonald had a duck,  
It ate his new, green, pick-up truck.

Old McDonald had a cow,  
It ate ten bags of puppy chow.

Old McDonald had a horse,  
It ate his rubber boots, of course.

Old McDonald had a pig,  
It ate his sister's brand-new wig.

Old McDonald had a dog,  
It ate the farmer's catalog.

### **Five Little Ladybugs**

(Finger Play)

Five little ladybugs climbing on some plants,  
Eating the aphids, but not the ants.  
The first one said, "Save some aphids for me."  
The second one said, "They're as tasty as can be."  
The third one said, "Oh they're almost gone."  
The fourth one said, "Then we'd better move on."  
The fifth one said, "Come on, let's fly!"  
So they opened up their wings and they flew through the sky.

### **I'm A Little Honeybee**

(To the tune of "I'm A Little Tea Pot")

G G  
I'm a little honeybee

C G

### Yellow and black

D7 G  
See me gather  
D7 G  
Pollen on my back  
G G  
What the queen bee tells me  
C G  
I must do  
D7 D7 G  
So I can make sweet honey for you!

### The Butterfly song

(To the tune of "Up on the Housetop")  
First comes a butterfly and lays an egg,  
Out comes a caterpillar with many legs,  
Oh see the caterpillar spin and spin,  
A little chrysalis to sleep in.  
Oh, oh ,oh wait and see  
Oh oh oh wait and see  
Out of the chrysalis,my oh my  
Out comes a pretty butterfly.

### The Fuzzy Caterpillar

(To the tune of "The Itsy Bitsy Spider")  
C C  
The fuzzy caterpillar  
G7 C  
Curled upon a leaf,  
C C  
Spun her little chrysalis  
F C  
And then fell asleep.  
C C  
While she was sleeping,  
G7 C  
She dreamed that she could fly,  
C C  
And later when she woke up  
G7 C  
She was a butterfly!

## Celebrations

### 100 Days Song

(To the tune of "I've Been Working on the Railroad")

C C  
We've been working in our classroom,  
F C  
For 100 days.  
C C  
We've been working in our classroom,  
D7 D7  
Here in the ----- grade.  
D7 C  
Rising early in the morning,  
F E7  
Bring our books and pencils too.  
F C  
Every day we come to ----- grade,  
G7 C  
We learn something new.

### Birthdays

(To tune of "Old MacDonald")

G G C G  
\_\_ 1st name \_\_ \_\_ last name \_\_ has a birthday,  
G D7 G  
Hip, hip, hooray!  
G G C G  
And on her cake, she has \_#&35;\_ candles,  
G D7 G  
What a happy day!  
G  
With a puff puff here  
G  
And a puff puff there,  
G  
Here a puff  
G  
There a puff  
G  
Everywhere a puff puff  
G G C G  
\_\_ 1st name \_\_ \_\_ last name \_\_ has a birthday.

G D7 G  
Hip, hip, hooray!

## Colors

### Color Song

(To the tune of "The Itsy Bitsy Spider")

C C  
Orange is a carrot,  
G C  
Yellow is a pear,  
C C  
Green is the grass,  
F C  
And brown is a bear,  
C C  
Purple is a plum,  
G C  
Blue is the sky,  
C C  
Black is a witch's hat,  
G C  
And red is cherry pie.

### If Your Clothes Have Any Color

(To the tune of "If You're Happy and You Know It")

F C7  
If your clothes have any red, any red,  
C7 F  
If your clothes have any red, any red,  
Bb  
If your clothes have any red,  
F Dm  
Put your hands up on your head,  
Gm C7 F  
If your clothes have any red, any red.

If your clothes have any blue, any blue,  
If your clothes have any blue, any blue,  
If your clothes have any blue,  
Put your finger on your shoe,  
If your clothes have any blue, any blue.

If your clothes have any green, any green,  
If your clothes have any green, any green,  
If your clothes have any green,  
Wave your hand so you are seen,  
If your clothes have any green, any green,

If your clothes have any yellow, any yellow,  
If your clothes have any yellow, any yellow,  
If your clothes have any yellow,  
Laugh like a happy fellow,  
If your clothes have any yellow, any yellow.  
ha, ha, ha!

If your clothes have any white, any white,  
If your clothes have any white, any white,  
If your clothes have any white,  
Give a hug with all your might,  
If your clothes have any white, any white,

If your clothes have any black, any black,  
If your clothes have any black, any black,  
If your clothes have any black,  
Pat your neighbor on the back,  
If your clothes have any black, any black,

If your clothes have any brown, any brown,  
If your clothes have any brown, any brown,  
If your clothes have any brown,  
Make a smile like a clown,  
If your clothes have any brown, any brown.

Spanish:

If your clothes have any rojo, any rojo,  
If your clothes have any rojo, any rojo,  
If your clothes have any red,  
Put your finger on your head,  
If your clothes have any rojo, any rojo.

Blue-azul  
Green-verde  
Yellow-amarillo  
White-blanco  
Black-negro  
Brown-marron

## *Earth*

### **Growth of a Tree**

(To the tune of "I'm a Little Teapot")

G                    C        G  
I'm a little maple, oh so small,  
D7        G            D7        G  
In years ahead, I'll grow so tall!  
G                    C        G  
With a lot of water, sun, and air,  
D7                            G  
I will soon be way up there!

Deep inside the soil my roots are found,  
Drinking the water underground.  
Water from the roots my trunk receives,  
Then my trunk starts making leaves.

As I start to climb in altitude,  
Leaves on my branches will make food.  
Soon my trunk and branches will grow wide,  
And I'll grow more bark outside!

I will be a maple very tall,  
Losing my leaves when it is fall.  
But when it is spring, new leaves will show.  
How do trees grow? Now you know!

Meish Goldish

### **I'm a Little Seed**

(To the tune of "I'm a Little Teapot")

G  
I'm a little seed,  
C            G  
Brown and fat,  
D7            G  
I haven't got a front,  
D7            G  
And I haven't got a back.  
G  
Plant me in the earth,  
C            G  
Give me water each day,

D7  
I'll grow to be an apple tree,  
G  
While you play!

### Reduce Reuse Recycle

(To the tune of "The More We Get Together")

C C  
Reduce Reuse Recycle  
G7 C  
Recycle... recycle

C C

### Reduce Reuse Recycle

G7 C  
It's easy to do  
G7  
Cause your trash  
C  
And my trash  
G7  
Make up way  
C  
Too much trash  
C C  
Reduce, Reuse, Recycle  
G7 C  
Its easy to do!

### The Family of the Sun

(To the tune of "The Farmer in the Dell")

C  
The family of the Sun,  
C  
The family of the Sun,  
F C G C  
Here are nine planets in  
C G C  
The family of the Sun.

Mercury is hot  
And Mercury is small.  
Mercury has no atmosphere.

It's just a rocky ball.

The family of the Sun,  
The family of the Sun,  
Here's another planet in  
The family of the Sun.

Venus has thick clouds  
That hide what is below  
The air is foul, the ground is hot,  
It rotates very slow.

(Repeat Refrain)

We love the Earth, our home,  
Its oceans and its trees.  
We eat its food, we breathe its air,  
So no pollution, please.

(Repeat Refrain)

Mars is very red.  
It's also dry and cold  
Some day you might visit Mars  
If you are really bold.

(Repeat Refrain)

Great Jupiter is big.  
We've studied it a lot.  
We found that it has 16 moons  
And a big red spot.

(Repeat Refrain)

Saturn has great rings.  
We wondered what they were.  
Now we know they're icy rocks  
Which we saw as a blur.

The family of the Sun,  
The family of the Sun,  
Here are two more planets in  
The family of the Sun.

Uranus and Neptune

We don't know much about  
Maybe you will study them  
And then we'll all find out.

(Repeat Refrain)

Pluto's last in line.  
It's farthest from the Sun.\*  
It's small and cold and icy too.  
To land there won't be fun.

The family of the Sun,  
The family of the Sun,  
There are nine planets and  
Now our journey's done.

\* Every 248 years, Pluto's orbit brings it inside Neptune's orbit for a period of 20 years. From 1979 to 1999, Neptune will be farthest from the Sun. (From Exploring the Planets Gallery, National Air and Space Museum, Smithsonian Institution)

### **This Old Earth**

(To the tune of "This Old Man")

C C  
This old earth  
C C  
Needs our help  
F C G7 G  
To stay fresh and clean and green  
C C C  
With a pick it up; pitch it in; and throw it in the can--  
G7 C C  
This old earth needs a helping hand!

### **Working on the Trash**

(To the tune of "I've Been Working on the Railroad")

C C F C  
We've been working on RECYCLING All the trash we can,  
C C D7 G7  
We've been working on recycling, It's a very simple plan,  
D7 C  
Separate your glass and paper,  
F C7  
Separate your plastic and tin.



(name) is a friend of mine,  
Friend of mine,  
Friend of mine,  
(name) is a friend of mine,  
Who (insert same action) around with me.

### Here We Are Together

C                    C                    G7                    C  
Here we are together, together, together,  
C                    C                    G7                    C  
Oh, here we are together, back in our school.  
G7                    C                    G7                    C  
There's \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_,  
C                    C                    G7                    C  
Oh, here we are together, back in our school.

### You Are My Best Friend

(To the tune of "You are my Sunshine")

G  
You are my best friend,  
G  
My very best friend,  
C  
You make me happy,  
G  
Everyday,  
C  
You share your great snacks,  
G  
You share your fun games,  
G  
Please don't take  
D7                    G  
My best friend away.

**Food**

**Apple**

(To the tune of BINGO)

C F C  
I know a fruit that grows on trees,  
C G7 C

An apple is its name, oh!

(Chorus)

C F  
A. P. P. L. E.

G C  
A. P. P. L. E.

Am G  
A. P. P. L. E.

G7 C  
An apple is its name, oh!

In summer and in early fall

It's time to pick an apple!

Chorus

It may be sweet or may be tart,

It's red, or green, or yellow!

### Chorus

A McIntosh or Granny Smith,

A Winesap or Delicious!

Chorus

Make applesauce or apple juice

Or apple pie with apples!

Chorus

### Applesauce

(To the tune of "Yankee Doodle")

F  
Peel an apple,

C7  
Cut it up,

F C7  
Cook it in a pot.

F  
When you taste it

Dm  
You will find

C7 F  
It's applesauce you've got.

### **Cooking Stone Soup**

(To the tune of "The Farmer in the Dell")

C  
We're cooking stone soup,  
C  
We're cooking stone soup,  
F  
Stir the pot,  
C  
It's getting hot,  
G7 C  
We're cooking stone soup.

First, we add a stone,  
First, we add a stone,  
Stir the pot,  
It's getting hot,  
We're cooking stone soup.  
(continue with the rest of the ingredients,  
ie: potatoes, carrots, water, onions, etc.)

### **Eat Them To Be Lean**

(To the tune of "Row, Row, Row Your Boat")

C C  
Milk, milk, eggs and cheese  
C C  
Fruits and vegetables  
C C  
Cereals, breads, and proteins,  
G7 C  
Eat them to be lean.

### **Food in my Tummy**

(To the tune, "Farmer in the Dell")

C  
Apples on a tree,  
C  
Apples on a tree,  
F  
Pick them off,  
C  
Eat them up,  
G G

Apples on a tree.

Carrots in the ground,  
Carrots in the ground,  
Pull them up,  
Wash them off,  
Carrots in the ground.

Tuna on a bun,  
Tuna on a bun,  
Take a bite,  
Chew it up,  
Tuna on a bun.

Sausage in a pan,  
Sausage in a pan,  
Sizzle, sizzle,  
Sizzle, sizzle,  
Sausage in a pan.

Cereal in a bowl,  
Cereal in a bowl,  
Pour on milk,  
Eat it up,  
Cereal in a bowl.

Milk in a glass,  
Milk in a glass,  
Lift it up ,  
Drink it all,  
Milk in a glass.

Jelly in a bowl,  
Jelly in a bowl,  
Wobble, wobble,  
Wobble, wobble,  
Jelly in a bowl.

Candies in a jar,  
Candies in a jar,  
Pick them out,  
Eat them up,  
Candies in a jar.

Ice cream in the pail,

Ice cream in the pail,  
Take it out,  
Scoop it up,  
Ice cream in a pail.

Food in your tummy,  
Food in your tummy,  
Lick your lips.  
Mmmm, mmmm, mmmm,  
Yum, yum, yummy!

### **Hug Sandwich**

(To the tune of "I'm a Little Teapot")

Gather children in a circle with two children in the middle.

G

I'm the peanut butter,  
(first child points to their chest)

C G

I'm the jam,  
(second child points to their chest)

D7 G

We stick together

D7 G

When we can.

(children link arms)

G G

Bread will gently squeeze us,  
(outside circle of children gently hugs the two in the middle)

C G

Squish, squash, squish,

D7

We make a yummy

D7 G

Hug sandwich!

### **Pumpkins In My Garden**

(To the tune of The Muffin Man)

C C

Do you know how pumpkins grow,

F G7

Pumpkins grow, pumpkins grow,

C C

Do you know how pumpkins grow?

F G7 C

In my garden?

First I plant some pumpkin seeds,  
some pumpkin seeds, some pumpkins seeds,  
First I plant some pumpkin seeds  
In my garden.

Then the vines and leaves will grow,  
leaves will grow, leaves will grow,  
Then the vines and leaves will grow,  
In my garden.

Then the buds will turn to blossoms,  
turn to blossoms, turn to blossoms,  
Then the buds will turn to blossoms,  
In my garden.

Then green pumpkins will grow,  
will grow, will grow,  
Then green pumpkins will grow,  
In my garden.

At last the pumpkins turn to orange,  
turn to orange, turn to orange,  
At last the pumpkins turn to orange,  
In my garden.

Now I'll have some jack-o-lanterns,  
jack-o-lanterns, jack-o-lanterns,  
Now I'll have some jack-o-lanterns,  
In my garden.

### Vegetables

(To the tune, "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star")

C            C  
Eat your vegetables  
F            C  
Clean your plate  
G7          C  
Eat your vegetables  
G7          C  
Veggies are great  
C            F  
String beans, broccoli  
C            G

Lettuce and peas  
C F  
Squash and brussel sprouts  
C G  
More corn, please!  
C C  
Cucumbers, eggplant  
F C  
Beets and tomatoes  
G7 C  
Celery, carrots  
G C  
Spinach and potatoes

Radishes, cauliflower  
Cabbage and cress  
Peppers and onions  
Asparagus? Yes!

Black beans, lima beans  
Soybeans too  
Eat your veggies  
They're good for you.

Eat your vegetables  
Clean your plate  
Eat your vegetables  
Veggies are great!

Meish Goldish

### **We're Going To Make a Cake**

(To the tune of "The Farmer's in his Dell")

C C  
We're going to make a cake, we're going to make a cake;  
F C  
We're going to make it really big,  
G C  
Because we all like cake.

Flour in the bowl, flour in the bowl;  
Stir it with a great big spoon,  
Flour in the bowl.

continue with other ingredients: sugar, salt,

raisins, butter, etc.

Put it in the oven, put it in the oven;  
Take care not to slam the door,  
Until it's nicely cooked.

Icing on the top, icing on the top;  
Spread it with a big, flat knife,  
Icing on the top.

We all have a piece, we all have a piece;  
Some for you and some for me,  
There's some for everyone.

And now it's all gone, and now it's all gone;  
Yumm it was very good,  
Now it's all gone.

### **Where is My Gingerbread Girl/Boy?**

(To the tune of "Oh Where Has My Little Dog Gone?")

          C                          G7  
Oh where, oh where is my Gingerbread girl/boy?  
          G7                          C  
Oh where, oh where can s/he be?  
          C                          G7  
S/he popped out the oven and ran out the door.  
          G7                          C  
Oh where, oh where can s/he be?

### ***Holidays***

#### **Albuquerque Turkey**

(Sung to the tune of "Clementine")

          C                          C  
Albuquerque is a turkey  
          C                          G7  
And he's feathered and he's fine  
          G                          C  
And he wobbles and he gobbles  
          G7                          C  
And he's absolutely mine.

He's the best pet that you can get..  
Better than a dog or cat.  
He's my Albuquerque turkey

And I'm awfully proud of that.

He once told me, very frankly  
He preferred to be my pet,  
Not the main course at my dinner,  
And I told him not to fret.

And my Albuquerque turkey  
Is so happy in his bed,  
'Cause for our Thanksgiving dinner...  
We had egg foo yong instead.

### Chinese Dragon

(To the tune of "Frere Jacques")

C G7 C C G7 C  
Chinese dragon, Chinese dragon,  
C G7 C C G7 C  
Breathing fire, breathing fire,  
C F C C  
Happy, happy new year,  
C F C C  
Happy, happy new year,  
C G7 C  
Gung hay fat choy,  
C G7 C  
Gung hay fat choy.

### Chinese New Year

Here Come The New Years

(To the tune of "Old MacDonald Had a Farm")

G G  
Here come the new years  
C G G D7 G  
Marching round, E-I-E-I-O  
G G  
And one of the years  
C G G D7 G  
Is the year of the Rat, E-I-E-I-O  
G  
With a squeak, squeak here,  
G  
And a squeak, squeak there,  
G G

Here a squeak, there a squeak,  
G  
Everywhere a squeak, squeak.  
G            G  
Here come the new years  
C            G        G D7 G  
Marching round, E-I-E-I-O.

Other Verses:

Year of the...  
Cow - moo, moo  
Tiger - grr,grr  
Rabbit - sniff, sniff  
Dragon - roar, roar  
Snake - hiss, hiss  
Horse - neigh, neigh  
Sheep - baa, baa  
Monkey - chee, chee  
Rooster - cock-a-doodle  
Dog - bow, wow  
Pig - oink, oink

### Five Little Turkeys

(Finger play)

5 little turkeys standing by door,  
One waddled off, and then there were 4.  
4 little turkeys under a tree,  
One waddled off, and then there were 3.  
3 little turkeys with nothing to do,  
One waddled off, and then there were 2.  
2 little turkeys in the noon-day sun,  
One waddled off, and then there was 1.  
One little turkey better run away,  
For soon will come Thanksgiving Day.

### Hallowe'en is Coming Soon

(Can be sung to the tune of London Bridge)

C    C            C        C    G7    G7    C        C  
Hallowe'en is coming soon, coming soon, coming soon,  
C    C            C        C  
Hallowe'en is coming soon,  
G7 G7 C  
Oh, what fun!

Black cats sitting on a fence, on a fence, on a fence,

Black cats sitting on a fence,  
Meow! Meow! Meow!

Owl's a-hooting in the trees, in the trees, in the trees,  
Owl's a-hooting in the trees,  
Whoo! Whoo! Whoo!

Witches flying on their brooms, on their brooms, on their brooms,  
Witches flying on their brooms,  
Eee! Eee! Eee!

Jack o'lanterns grin at you, grin at you, grin at you,  
Jack o'lanterns grin at you,  
Oh! Oh! Oh!

Hallowe'en is coming soon, coming soon, coming soon,  
Hallowe'en is coming soon,  
Oh, what fun!

### **I'm a Little Groundhog**

(To the tune of "I'm a Little Teapot")

G        G        C        G  
I'm a little groundhog short and stout,  
D7        G        D7        G  
February second I will come out.

G        G        C        G  
If I see my shadow they will shout,  
D7                    D7                    G  
"Six weeks more winter without a doubt!"

I'm a little groundhog, it's my day.  
Wake and stretch, go out and play.  
Down in my burrow, oh so deep,  
Time to wake, from my long winter's sleep.

Grumble, grumble, scratch, scratch,  
Grunt, grunt, yawn.  
I'll eat my breakfast in your front lawn.  
I'm a little groundhog, it's my day.  
Wake and stretch, go out and play.

### **Martin Luther King, Jr.**

(Chant)

Children pound lightly as they chant and when spell they out K-I-N-G they clap.  
Martin Luther King,  
Martin Luther King,

Martin Luther K-I-N-G  
Martin Luther K-I-N-G

Justice, Equal Rights, Liberty and Freedom  
He had a dream that we shall overcome.  
Justice, Equal Rights, Liberty and Freedom  
He had a dream that we would all be one.

Martin Luther King,  
Martin Luther King,  
Martin Luther K-I-N-G  
Martin Luther K-I-N-G

### **My Dreidel**

G  
I Have a Little Dreidel  
G D7  
I made it out of clay.  
D7  
And when it's dry and ready,  
D7 G  
Oh dreidel I shall play.

Chorus:

G  
Oh dreidel, dreidel, dreidel,  
G D7  
I made it out of clay;  
D7  
And when its dry and ready,  
D7 G  
Then dreidel I shall play.

It has a lovely body,  
With legs so short and thin,  
And when it gets all tired,  
It drops and then I win.

(Chorus)

My dreidel's always playful  
It loves to dance and spin  
A happy game of dreidel  
Come play now, let's begin!

(Chorus)

**Shadow Time (Ground Hog's Day)**

(To the tune of "The Itsy-bitsy Spider")

C C  
The furry little groundhog

G C  
Goes in his hole to sleep,

C C  
Through the cold winter's

F C  
Snow and ice so deep,

C C  
In February

G C  
He stretches to and fro,

C C  
Does the furry little groundhog

G C  
Get scared by his shadow?

**The Reindeer Pokey**

(To the tune of The Hokey Pokey)

F F  
You put your antlers in.

F F  
You put your antlers out.

F F  
You put you antlers in,

C7 C7  
And you shake them all about.

C7 C7  
You do the Reindeer Pokey,

C7 C7  
And you turn yourself around.

C7 C7 F  
That's what it's all about!

You put your hooves in....

You put your red nose in....

You put your fluffy tail in...

You put your reindeer body in...

### Three Little Witches

(Can be sung to the tune of Three Little Indians)

C C C C  
One little, two little, three little witches,  
G G G G  
Fly over haystacks, fly over ditches,  
C C C C  
Slide down moon beams without any hitches,  
G7 G7 C  
Hey ho Hallowe'en's here!

Horned owl's hooting, it's time to go riding,  
Deep in the shadows are black cats hiding,  
With gay little goblins, sliding, gliding,  
Hey ho Hallowe'en's here!

Stand on your head with a lopsided wiggle,  
Tickle your little black cats till they giggle,  
Swish through clouds with a higgedy, piggle,  
Hey ho Hallowe'en's here!

### Turkey Trouble

(To the tune of "Mary Had a Little Lamb")

C C C C  
We cooked turkey, nice and hot,  
G7 G7 C C  
Nice and hot, nice and hot.  
C C C C  
We cooked turkey nice and hot  
G7 G7 C  
On Thanksgiving Day.

We eat turkey a whole lot,  
A whole lot, a whole lot.  
We eat turkey a whole lot.  
It will not go away!

Sandwiches and soup are fine.  
By the way, would you like mine?  
Pot pie lasts a long, long time,  
It's turkey every day!

### Three Valentines

(To the tune of "Mary Had a Little Lamb")

C C

Three valentines I have for you,  
 G7 C  
 Have for you, have for you,  
 C C  
 Three valentines I have for you,  
 G7 C  
 Pink and red and blue.

I'll put them in the mail for you,  
 Mail for you, mail for you,  
 I'll put them in the mail for you,  
 Pink and red and blue.

### **Heart**

(To the tune of BINGO)

C F C

To show you like your special friend,  
 C G7 C  
 Just give them a heart,  
 C F G C Am G  
 H. E. A. R. T, H. E. A. R. T, H. E. A. R. T,  
 G7 C  
 Each heart says I like you.

### **Math**

#### **A Penny Is One Cent**

(Finger Play)  
 A penny is one cent.  
 (stamp your foot)  
 A nickel is five.  
 (slap your thigh)  
 A dime is ten cents.  
 (clap your hands)  
 A quarter twenty-five.  
 (snap fingers over your head)  
 How many cents have I on this try?

For example:  
 Snap, stamp, stamp ... would be 27 cents.

### **Clock Song**

(To the tune of "The Wheels on the Bus")

C C  
The hands on the clock go round and round,  
G C  
Round and round, round and round.  
C C  
The hands on the clock go round and round.  
G C  
To tell us the time.

The short hand on the clock  
Goes from number to number,  
Number to number, number to number.  
The short hand on the clock  
Goes from number to number.  
To tell us the time.

The long hand on the clock  
Goes around by fives,  
Around by fives, around by fives.  
The long hand on the clock  
Goes around by fives.  
To tell us the minutes.

### Days of the Week

(To the tune: Are you Sleeping)

C G7 C C G7 C  
Every week has seven days,  
C G7 C C G7 C  
See how many you can say.  
C G7 C  
Sunday, Monday, Tuesday,  
C G7 C  
Wednesday, Thursday, Friday,  
C-G7-C C G7 C  
Saturday. What's today?

Spanish:

Every week has siete days,  
See how many you can say,  
Domingo, Lunes, Martes  
Miércoles, Jueves, Viernes,  
Sábado...¿Qué es hoy?





### *Openings/Closings and Action*

#### **Chinese Hello Song**

(To the tune of "The Farmer in the Dell")

C C  
Let's wave and say "Ni hao (nee how),"

C C  
Let's wave and say "Ni hao."

F C G C  
Let's say "hello" to all our friends,

C G7 C  
Let's wave and say "ni hao."

#### **Fun to Do**

C  
Singing a song is fun to do,

G7 C  
Fun to do, to do, to do!

C  
Singing a song is fun to do,

G7 C  
To do, to do, to do!

Other fun things to do:

Reading a book

Riding a bike

Doing a dance

Cleaning my room

Helping a friend

#### **Good Morning Song**

(To the tune, "The Farmer in the Dell")

C  
Oh, the duck says "Quack",

C  
And the cow says "Moo",

F G7 C  
The old red rooster says

C G C  
"Cock-a-doodle-doo".

C

The sheep says "Baa",  
 C  
 And the cat says "Meow",  
 F G7 C  
 But I say "Good Morning  
 C G C  
 When I see you!

### Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes (with Spanish)

C C  
 Head, shoulders, knees, and toes,  
 G7 G  
 Knees and toes, knees and toes  
 C C  
 Head, shoulders, knees, and toes,  
 G7 C  
 Eyes, ears, mouth, and nose.

Spanish  
 Cabeza, hombros, rodillas, y dedos,  
 Rodillas, y dedos,  
 Rodillas, y dedos,  
 Cabeza, hombros, rodillas, y dedos,  
 Ojos, orejas, boca y nariz.

### Here We Come Just A-Walkin'

(To the tune of "Do Wah Ditty")  
 G C G  
 Here we come just a-walkin' down the hall  
 G C G  
 Singing do wah ditty ditty dum ditty doo.  
 G C G  
 Hands by our sides and standing tall  
 G C G  
 Singing do wah ditty ditty dum ditty doo!  
 G  
 We look good, we look good!  
 G  
 We look fine, we look fine!  
 G G  
 We look good, we look fine,

G G  
Here we go in our line!

### If You're Happy and You Know It

F F  
If you're happy and you know it,  
C7

Clap your hands...(clap, clap)  
C7 C7

If you're happy and you know it,  
F

Clap your hands...(clap, clap)  
Bb Bb

If you're happy and you know it,  
F Dm

Then your face will surely show it  
Gm C7

If you're happy and you know it,  
F

Clap your hands...(clap, clap)

Tap your toes  
Blink your eyes  
Snap your fingers

### Jump, Jump in Class

(To the tune of "B-I-N-G-O")

C F C  
There was a class that had a girl/boy,  
C G7 C

And \_\_\_\_ was her/his name-o,  
C F

Jump, jump \_\_\_\_ (child's name),  
G C

Jump, jump, \_\_\_\_ (child's name),  
Am G

Jump, jump, \_\_\_\_ (child's name),  
G7 C

We're glad you're here today.

### **Make a Circle**

(To the tune of "Oh My Darling, Clementine")

          C  
Make a circle,  
          C  
Make a circle,  
          G  
Make a circle,  
          G  
Like the sun -  
      G7          C  
Ev'rybody make a circle,  
          G7  
Make a circle,  
          C  
Like the sun.

### **See You Later**

See you later alligator,  
Bye bye butterfly,  
Give a hug ladybug,  
Be sweet parakeet,  
Blow a kiss goldfish,  
See you soon raccoon,  
Take care polar bear,  
Out the door dinosaur!

### **The More We Get Together**

          C          C  
The more we get together  
      G7          C  
Together, together,  
          C          C  
The more we get together,  
      G7          C  
The happier we'll be.  
      G7          C  
For your friends are my friends,  
      G7          C  
And my friends are your friends,  
      C          C  
The more we get together,

G7 C  
The happier we'll be.

(Optional wording)  
Here we are together,  
Together, together,  
Oh, here we are together  
In our \_\_\_\_\_th grade.  
There's \_\_\_\_\_(name) and \_\_\_\_\_(name)  
And \_\_\_\_\_(name) and \_\_\_\_\_(name)  
Oh, here we are together  
In our \_\_\_\_\_th grade.

### **Reading**

#### **Adjective, Noun, Verb Song**

(To the tune, "Farmer in the Dell")

C  
Busy teachers work,  
C  
Busy teachers work,  
F C  
Busy teachers tiredly work,  
G C  
In the class today.

Make a list (only one noun):

Adjective Noun Adverb Verb Prepositional Phrase

Busy	teachers	quickly	plan	in the school
Smelly		tiredly	laugh	in the class
Funny		shrewdly	jump	over the field
Happy		slowly	skip	on the blackboard

Have children mix the adjectives, adverbs, verbs, and prep. phrase to make amusing sentences.

### **Letters**

(To the tune "If You're Happy and You Know It")

F F  
If you're happy and you know it,  
C7  
Bounce around "b" "b"

C7                    C7  
 If you're happy and you know it,  
                                  F  
 Bounce around "b" "b"  
                                  Bb                    Bb  
 If you're happy and you know it,  
                                  F                    Dm  
 Then your face will surely show it  
                                  Gm                    C7  
 If you're happy and you know it,  
                                  F  
 Bounce around "b" "b".

Catch a ball "c" "c"...  
 Dance with me "d" "d"...  
 Fall down "f" "f"...  
 Gallop like a horse "g" "g"...  
 Hop on one foot "h" "h"...  
 Jump so high "j" "j"...  
 Kick in the air "k" "k"...  
 Laugh out loud "l" "l"...  
 March in place "m" "m"...  
 Nod your head "n" "n"...  
 Paint a picture "p" "p"...  
 Run in place "r" "r"...  
 Sit on the floor "s" "s"...  
 Talk to me "t" "t"...  
 Vacuum the rug "v" "v"...  
 Walk around "w" "w"...  
 Yawn right now "y" "y"...  
 Zip your zipper "z" "z"...

### Old Macdonald's Vowel Song

(To the tune of "Old Macdonald Had a Farm", this version is using short vowels, but you can change it for long vowels too)

G                    C                    G                    G D7 G  
 Old Macdonald had a farm AEIOU...  
                                  G                    C                    G                    G D7 G  
 And on this farm he had an lamb, AEIOU  
                                  G  
 With an AA here and an AA there  
                                  G  
 Here an A there an A every where an AA  
 G                    C                    G                    G D7 G  
 Old MacDonald had a farm AEIOU

Old MacDonald had a farm AEIOU  
And on this farm he had a hen, AEIOU  
With and EE here and a EE there  
Here an E there an E every where an EE  
Old MacDonald had a farm AEIOU

Old MacDonald had a farm AEIOU  
And on this farm he had a pig, AEIOU  
With and II here and a II there  
Here an I there an I every where an II

### **Old MacDonald had a farm AEIOU**

Old MacDonald had a farm AEIOU  
And on this farm he had a dog, AEIOU  
With and OO here and a OO there  
Here an O there an O every where an OO  
Old MacDonald had a farm AEIOU

Old MacDonald had a farm AEIOU  
And on this farm he had a duck, AEIOU  
With and UU here and a UU there  
Here an U there an U every where an UU  
Old MacDonald had a farm AEIOU.

### **Punctuation Marks**

(To the tune, "The Farmer in the Dell")

C

Periods a busy man.

C

A small round traffic cop.

C F C F

He blocks the helter-skelter words

C G C

And brings them to a stop.

Question mark's a tiny girl,  
She's small but very wise;  
She asks too many questions  
For a person of her size.

Of all the punctuation,  
I like the comma best.  
For when I'm getting out of breath



### **The Contraction Song**

(To the tune of "London Bridge is Falling Down")

C                    C  
I'm the first word; don't change me!  
G7                    C  
Don't change me, don't change me.  
C                    C  
I'm the first word; don't change me!  
G7                    C  
Oh, no, just let me be.

When you change the second word,  
Second word, second word,  
When you change the second word,  
A shorter word you'll see.

Certain letters are taken out,  
Taken out, taken out.  
Certain letters are taken out.  
One word will remain.

Apostrophe will fill that space,  
Fill that space, fill that space.  
Apostrophe will fill that space,  
The rest will stay the same.

Can't and couldn't, isn't, too.  
Isn't, too, isn't, too,  
Won't and I've and let's, it's true,  
Contractions every one.

I'm and she's and you're and he'd,  
You're and he'd, you're and he'd,  
Wouldn't, didn't, we'll and she'd,  
Good! And now we're done.

### **Two Vowels Together**

(To the tune of "Are You Sleeping?")

C G7 C  
I see two vowels (point to eyes)  
C G7 C  
I see two vowels,  
C G7 C  
I hear one (point to ears)  
C G7 C

I hear one

C F C G7 C

First one does the talking (point to mouth)

C F C G7 C

Second keeps on walking (walk fingers)

C G7 C

Yes, indeed!

C G7 C

Yes, indeed!

Can you hear it?

Can you hear it?

Braid and beat

Goat and feet

I can hear just one vowel.

Do you hear just one vowel?

Yes, indeed!

Yes, indeed!

### **Vowels**

(To the tune "The Farmer in the Dell")

C

A is my name.

C

Two sounds I make.

F C

Short a in lamb,

G C

Long a in cake!

I is my name

Two sounds have I

Short i in pig,

Long i in pie!

O is my name

Two sounds I know

Short o in pot,

Long o in go!

E is my name

Two sounds for me

Short e in hen

Long e in he!

U is my name  
Two sounds for you  
Short u in cup  
Long u in cue!

### ***Science and Social Studies Category***

#### **Are Your Teeth Clean and White**

(To the tune, "Do Your Ears Hang Low!")

          C                  C  
Are your teeth clean and white?  
          C                  C  
Do you brush them every night?  
          C                  C  
Do you brush them in the morning?  
          G7              G7  
Do you brush them right?  
          C                  C  
Do you brush them side to side?  
          C                  C  
Where the food wants to hide?  
          C      G7      C  
Are your teeth clean and white?

#### **Do you floss them good**

To remove the bits of food?  
Do you floss them every day?  
Like you know you should?  
Do you take good care of  
The teeth that are there?  
Do you floss them good?

#### **I'm Full of Bones**

(Sung to the tune, "If You're Happy and You Know It, Clap Your Hands")

          F                  F                  C7  
From my fingers to my toes, I'm full of bones.  
          C7              C7                  F  
From my fingers to my toes, I'm full of bones.  
          Bb                                  F          Dm  
If you count them all as one, they make a skeleton.  
          Gm              C7                  F  
From my fingers to my toes, I'm full of bones.

My smallest bone is found inside my ear.  
My smallest bone is found inside my ear.  
The stirrup helps me hear,  
Many sounds both far and near.

My smallest bone is found inside my ear.  
My longest bone is found inside my leg.  
My longest bone is found inside my leg.  
My femur's really great 'cause it helps me stand up straight.  
My longest bone is found inside my leg.

My joints help my bones to move around.  
My joints help my bones to move around.  
My hips, elbows, and knees: Oh, it's all so plain to see  
That my joints help my bones to move around.

---Jennifer Prescott

### **I've been Brushing**

(To the tune, "I've Been working on the railroad")

C C  
I've been brushing with my toothbrush,  
F C  
Brushing everyday.  
C  
I've been brushing with my toothbrush,  
D7  
It's how I fight decay.  
D7 C  
All my teeth are gonna sparkle,  
F E7  
How proud I will be.  
F C  
Every time I want to smile,  
G7 C  
My teeth will shine for me!

Chorus:

C  
Always brush your teeth,  
F  
Every single day.



*Texas, then there's Utah.*

*Vermont, I'm almost through. Virginia, then there's Washington and West Virginia, too.*

*Could Wisconsin be the last one in the 49?*

*No, Wyoming is the last state in the 50 states that rhyme.*

When I sat down all out of breath the teacher said, "That's great! I'm quite impressed you were the best in listing all the states. But if you wanna get an 'A' for that silly little rhyme, stand back up and sing that song, but do it double time!" (Then you sing it again faster!)

### **The Dendrite Song**

(To the tune, "Clementine")

C

Use your dendrites,

C

Use your dendrites,

G

G

To connect throughout your brain.

G

C

Take in info, analyze it,

G7

Grow some new ones

C

Unrestrained.

Axons send out

Neurotransmitters

To the dendrites all around

Across the synapse

Jumps the impulse

New ideas can now abound.

Stimulation

Is what the brain needs

To make dendrites stretch and grow.

New connections

Make us smarter

In what we think and what we know.

Use your dendrites,

Use your dendrites,

To connect throughout your brain

Take in info, analyze it,

Grow some new ones

Unrestrained.

Bruce Campbell

## Seasons

### Five Little Inuit

(Finger Play)

Five little Inuit fishing in the ice,  
The first one said, "I'm glad we're being nice."  
The second one said, "There's a polar bear over there."  
The third one said, "I don't care."  
The fourth one said, "I'm going to my igloo."  
The fifth one said, "I think I'm going with you."  
Then wooh went the wind, and out went the light,  
And the five little Inuit skated out of sight.

### Goodbye Winter

(To the tune of "Goodnight Ladies")

C C  
Goodbye winter,  
C G  
Goodbye winter,  
C F  
Goodbye winter,  
C G C

Please go away!

continue by replacing "winter" with other winter words  
eg: snowsuits, snow, scarves, toques, mittens, etc.

### Hello Spring

(To the tune of "Goodnight Ladies")

C C  
Hello spring,  
C G  
Hello spring,  
C F  
Hello spring,  
C G C

We hope you're here to stay.

replace the word "spring" with other spring words  
eg: green grass, robins, rainbow, flowers, butterflies, etc.

## November

(To Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star)

C  
In November  
F            C  
Dark comes soon.  
F        C        G  
We turn on the lights  
      C  
At noon.

---Stacee Anderson

## Seasons of the Year

(To the tune of "Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush")

CHORUS:

G            G            G    G  
Here we go round the year again,  
Am        Am        D7    D7  
The year again, the year again.  
G            G            G    G  
Here we go round the year again,  
D7            D7        G    G  
To greet the different seasons.

Wintertime is time for snow.  
To the south, the birds will go.  
It's too cold for plants to grow  
Because it is the winter.

Here we go round the year again,  
The year again, the year again.  
Here we go round the year again,  
To greet the different seasons.

In the springtime, days grow warm.  
On the plants, the new buds form.  
Bees and bugs come out to swarm

Because it is the spring.

#### CHORUS

In summertime, the days are hot.  
Ice cold drinks I drink a lot!  
At the beach, I've got a spot  
Because it is the summer.

#### CHORUS

Fall is here, the air is cool.  
Days are short, it's back to school.  
Raking leaves is now the rule  
Because it is autumn.

#### CHORUS

Meish Goldish

#### **Snowflakes**

(To the tune of "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star")

C            C            F    C  
Snowflakes, snowflakes falling down,  
F    C            G    C  
On the trees and on the ground.  
C    F    C        G  
I will build a man of snow,  
C        F        C    G  
Tall black hat and eyes of coal,  
C    C            F    C  
If the sun comes out today,  
F    C            G    C  
I will watch you melt away!

#### **Springtime**

(To the tune of "The Muffin Man")

C            C    C    C  
Springtime is garden time,  
F        F        G    G  
Garden time, garden time,  
C            C            C    C

Get your spades and come outdoors,  
F G C  
Springtime is here!

Springtime is planting time,  
Planting time, planting time,  
Get your seeds and come outdoors,  
Springtime is here!

Springtime is jumping time,  
Jumping time, jumping time,  
Get your ropes and come outdoors,  
Springtime is here!

Springtime is singing time,  
Singing time, singing time,  
Children sing a happy song,  
Springtime is here!

### **The Leaves are Falling Down**

(To the tune of "The Farmer in the Dell")

C  
The leaves are falling down  
C  
The leaves are falling down  
F C G C  
School is here and fall in near  
C G7 C  
The leaves are falling down.

The leaves are falling down  
The leaves are falling down  
Some are red and some are brown  
The leaves are falling down.

The leaves are falling down  
The leaves are falling down  
They tickle your nose and touch your toes  
The leaves are falling down.

---June Haggard

## The Leaves of the Trees

(To the tune of "The Wheels on the Bus")

C

### The leaves of the trees turn orange and red

G C  
orange and red, orange and red  
C

The leaves of the trees turn orange and red

G C  
All through the town.

The leaves of the trees come tumbling down  
tumbling down, tumbling down  
The leaves of the trees come tumbling down  
All through the town.

The leaves on the ground go swish, swish, swish  
Swish, swish, swish, swish, swish, swish,  
The leaves on the ground go swish, swish, swish  
All through the town.

---Irmgard Guertges

## The Snowman

(To the tune of "I'm a Little Teapot")

G C G  
I'm a little snowman round and fat,  
D7 G

Here are my mittens,

D7 G

Here is my hat.

G C G  
Add a little scarf and a carrot nose.

D7 D7 G  
You stand so tall when the cold wind blows.

## Thunder and Lightning

(To the tune of "Pop Goes the Weasel")

C G C  
When a storm begins in the clouds,  
C G C

It sometimes may look frightening.  
C G C

You see a quick electrical spark--  
F      G7      C  
Flash! goes the lightning!

Long and thin and streaky and fast,  
Its glow is oh so brightening.  
Watch for the electric spark--  
Flash! goes the lightning!

When a storm begins in the clouds,  
It truly is a wonder.  
You hear a rumble loud in the sky--  
Clap! goes the thunder!

Lightning bolts are heating the air,  
Over clouds and under.  
When the air expands enough--  
Clap! goes the thunder.

### **Water Cycle**

(To the tune of "It's Raining, It's Pouring")

                  C                   C  
It's raining, it's pouring,  
                  C                   C  
The oceans are storing  
                  G                   G  
Water from the falling rain  
                  G                   C  
While thunderclouds are roaring.

The rain now is stopping,  
The rain's no longer dropping.  
Sun comes out and soaks up water  
Like a mop that's mopping.

The water's still there now,  
But hidden in the air now.  
In the clouds it makes a home  
Until there's rain to share now.

It's raining, it's pouring...

---Meish Goldish

### **Weather Song**

(To the tune of "Oh My Darling")

C  
What's the weather?  
C  
What's the weather?  
G G  
What's the weather, everyone?  
G  
Is it windy?  
C  
Is it cloudy?  
G7  
Is there rain?  
C  
Or is there sun?

### **Where Is the Rain**

(African Chant)

The giraffe and the elephant went for a walk.  
They stopped in some shade and started to talk;  
"I wish it would rain," said the giraffe with a sigh.  
"I'm tired of watching the clouds pass us by!"  
"Yes," said the elephant, "Where is the rain?  
I wish I could eat fresh green leaves again.  
The sun is so hot and the land is so dry;  
When will the rain fall from the sky?"  
Later in the day the sky turned grey,  
The flying ants flew out to say,  
"The rain is coming! We smell it in the air!  
And in the distance, thunder we hear!"  
The giraffe and the elephant looked up at the sky  
And heard the black eagle give forth his cry,  
"The rain has come, The rivers will flow;  
The dry season is over; now the green grass will grow!"  
note: Most rivers in Africa are dependent upon the rains. During the dry season they literally dry up and leave a brown, twisting snake-like path. The rainy season in KwaZulu is Summer time, when they get the most fantastic thunder storms imaginable. And these horrible flying ants always appear right before the first big storms!

### **Winter, Spring, Summer, Fall**

(To the tune of "This Old Man")

C      C      C      C  
 Winter, Spring, Summer, Fall  
 F          G7          G      G7  
 There are seasons, four in all.  
 C          C          C                      C  
 Weather changes, sun and rain and snow,  
 G7                      C   G   C  
 Leaves fall down and flowers grow.

Winter, Spring, Summer, Fall  
 There are seasons, four in all.  
 Look outside and you will see  
 Just what season it will be!

### ***Transportation***

#### **Vusi Drives the Kombi**

(A Chant)

Vusi drives the kombi that takes us all to school.  
 We open all the windows so the air blows nice and cool.  
 He hoots when he fetches us, he hoots when he goes,  
 He hoots at the cows that are standing in the road.  
 Vusi drives the kombi that we all love to ride.  
 If you want to travel with us, there's lots of room inside!

note: a "kombi" [pronounced like "calm-bee"] is a small passenger van. These vehicles are used as taxis in South Africa. Most school children travel to school on these taxis. Vusi is a common Zulu name. Pronounced /voo-see/, it means "to lift up."

#### **Walking Through Africa**

(A chant)

Walking through Africa, what do I see?  
 I can see inyoka looking at me.  
 Walking through Africa, what do I see?  
 I can see ufudu looking at me.  
 Walking through Africa, what do I see?  
 I can see indlovu looking at me.  
 Walking through Africa, what do I see?  
 I can see ikhozi looking at me.

note: This is a Zulu chant the children "sing" while they stalk about. The translation would probably be closer to "walking through the bush...", but my children love to say Africa. I've translated all the words but the animals. These are as follows:

inyoka (een-yoh'-gkah) a snake  
 ufudu (oo-foo'-doo) a tortoise, /oo/ as in fool  
 indlovu (een-dloh'-voo) an elephant  
 ikhozi (ee-koh'zee) an eagle

### Traditional Songs with Chords

#### Bingo

C                      F    C            C    G7            C  
 There was a farmer had a dog and Bingo was his name-o.  
 C    F  
 B - I - N - G - O.  
 G    C  
 B - I - N - G - O.  
 Am   G                      G7                      C  
 B - I - N - G - O and Bingo was his name-o!

#### Clementine ( In a Cavern )

C  
 In a cavern, in a canyon,  
 G  
 Excavating for a mine,  
 G                      C  
 Dwelt a miner, forty-niner,  
 G7                                      C  
 And his daughter Clementine.

Refrain:

C  
 Oh my darling, oh my darling,  
 G  
 Oh my darling Clementine  
 G                                      C  
 You are lost and gone forever,  
 G7                                      C  
 Dreadful sorry, Clementine.

#### (The) Farmer in the Dell

C  
 The farmer in the dell.

The farmer in the dell.

F C G7 C  
Hi-ho the derry-o the farmer in the dell.

### Here We Go 'Round the Mulberry Bush

C  
Here we go 'round the mulberry bush,  
G  
the mulberry bush, the mulberry bush.

C  
Here we go 'round the mulberry bush,  
G7 C  
On a cold and frosty morning.

### Hokey Pokey

F  
You put your right foot in.  
You put your right foot out.  
C7  
You put your right foot in and you shake it all about!  
You do the Hokey Pokey and you turn yourself around.  
F  
That's what it's all about!

### I'm a Little Teapot

G  
I'm a little teapot  
C G  
Short and stout.  
D7 G  
Here is my handle  
D7 G  
Here is my spout.  
G  
When I get all steamed up  
C G  
Here me shout.  
D7  
Tip me over and  
G  
Pour me out.

## I've Been Working on the Railroad

C  
I've been working on the railroad  
F C  
All the livelong day  
C  
I've been working on the railroad  
D7  
Just to pass the time away  
C  
Can't you hear the whistle blowing  
F E7  
Rise up so early in the morn  
F C  
Can't you hear the captain shouting  
G7 C  
Dinah, blow your horn

C  
Dinah, won't you blow  
F  
Dinah, won't you blow  
G7 C  
Dinah, won't you blow your horn?  
C  
Dinah, won't you blow  
F  
Dinah, won't you blow  
G7 C  
Dinah, won't you blow your horn?

C  
Someone's in the kitchen with Dinah  
G7  
Someone's in the kitchen I know  
C F  
Someone's in the kitchen with Dinah  
G7 C  
Strumming on the old bango, and singing

C  
Fie, fi, fiddly i o  
G7  
Fie, fi, fiddly i o  
C F  
Fie, fi, fiddly i o





### Row, Row, Row Your Boat

C  
Row, row, row your boat  
Gently down the stream.  
Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily  
G7 C  
Life is but a dream.

### This Old Man

C  
This old man, he played one.  
F G  
He played knick-knack on my thumb.  
C  
With a knick-knack paddy-whack, give a dog a bone.  
G7 G C  
This old man came rolling home.

### Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star

C F C  
Twinkle, twinkle little star.  
F C G C  
How I wonder what you are.  
C F C G  
Up above the world so high,  
C F C G  
Like a diamond in the sky.  
C F C  
Twinkle, twinkle little star.  
F C G C  
How I wonder what you are.

### You Are My Sunshine

G  
You are my sunshine, my only sunshine  
C G  
You make me happy when skies are gray  
C G  
You'll never know dear, how much I love you

G D7 G  
Please don't take my sunshine away

### **(The) Wheels on the Bus**

C  
The wheels on the bus go round and round  
G  
Round and round  
C  
Round and round.  
C  
The wheels on the bus go round and round  
G C  
All through the town.

### **Where is Thumbkin? (Frere Jacques)**

C G7 C  
Where is Thumbkin?  
C G7 C  
Where is Thumbkin?  
C G7 C  
Here I am!  
C G7 C  
Here I am!  
C F C  
How are you today, sir?  
C F C  
Very well, I thank you.  
C G7 C  
Run away.  
C G7 C  
Run away.

### **Yankee Doodle**

F C7  
Yankee Doodle went to town,  
F C7  
Riding on his pony,  
F Dm  
He stuck a feather in his cap,  
C7 F  
And called it macaroni.  
Dm  
Yankee Doodle pick it up,  
F

Yankee Doodle dandy,  
Dm  
Yankee Doodle keep it up  
C7 F  
And let the girls be handy.

## **Love and Logic**

Danielle Beamish

*™Love and Logic: A framework for classroom management that will keep you from pulling your hair out and empower you to teach respectful and responsible students.*

### **Why Love and Logic?**

After fall student teaching I was mentally exhausted. Unfortunately, this fatigue was not a symptom of teaching content but from failed classroom management strategies. My personal estimations suggest that 60% of my daily energy was spent on managing student behavior, and that was a good day. After reviewing what failed, I realized I needed an approach that felt good, required smaller amounts of energy, didn't involve a hundred rules, yelling, lecturing, or threatening, and would benefit kids in the long run. While explaining my situation to a friend, she mentioned the school her children attend use techniques from the *Love and Logic* program and that she was also learning how to use it in her home. My friend felt that as a parent and school volunteer these techniques were extremely helpful and allowed her to enjoy the mistakes her children made rather than dreading the amount of energy she normally spent lecturing and punishing her children.

To learn more about the topic, I read *Teaching with Love and Logic: Taking Control of the Classroom*, interviewed three Washington state educators and attended a *Love and Logic* conference in Portland, Washington. My first step was reading, *Teaching with Love and Logic*. Half way through, I knew that this program was going to have a positive effect on my classroom management. Further, the book allowed me to gain a sufficient knowledge base about the topic to then create informed interview questions. With the help of friends and other educators I found many teachers and entire schools who use *Love and Logic*. However, for this project I interviewed three teachers who use *Love and Logic* techniques on a daily basis. All three teachers felt that *Love and Logic* helped them make positive changes in the way they communicate with students and their guardians. The interviews provided me with real world context that I needed to see how Love and Logic works in the "real world." My favorite piece of the project was attending the conference, *Love and Logic: Classroom Strategies for Preventing Disruptive Behavior and Teaching Responsibility*. The conference gave me great information and practical skills to use in the classroom that will allow me to make positive changes in the way I communicate with students and their parents.

(The information provided in this paper are summaries based on information directly provided by the *Love and Logic Institute* and Washington State educators who use *Love and Logic*.)

### **Love and Logic Philosophy**

The *Love and Logic* philosophy was developed by Jim Fay (30 year educator and principal) and Foster W. Cline M.D. (adult and child psychiatrist). The following statements provide the theoretical foundation of the *Love and Logic* program:

- (1) Studies examining basic principles of learning and conditioning, including cognitive or social learning theories (e.g., Bandura, 1977; Pavlov, 1927; Rescorla, 1988; Thorndike, 1905; Skinner, 1953; Watson & Reyner, 1920).

- (2) Research examining human emotional needs and their relationship to motivation (e.g., Glasser, 1969; Maslow, 1954; Ng, 1980; and Rogers, 1961) (Fay, C., (n.d.), p.2).

The founders of *Love and Logic* developed their methods based off the idea that all people have basic human needs. These methods directly affect students’ need for inclusion (I am needed), structure (predictability), control (I am capable) and affection (I am loved). The philosophy states that, “love allows children to grow through their mistakes and logic allows children to live with the consequences of their choices” (Warrick, L., n.d., p.1). The theoretical core of this approach is the idea that success for children of all ages rests on a balance of “unconditional compassion, firm behavioral limits, and logical consequences” (Worrick, n.d., p.2). Further, the concepts behind *Love and Logic* heavily emphasize respect and dignity for children. This in turn helps children develop and grow in a healthy way, provides them with confidence and dignity, and teaches them how to become more responsible. “The primary goal of the *Love and Logic* program is to provide parents, educators, and others working with children practical strategies for reducing behavior problems, increasing motivation, and building assets which contribute to life-long responsibility and resiliency” (Fay, n.d., p.1).

### Guiding Rules

Teachers who interact with students through *Love and Logic* techniques are guided by three basic rules.

<b>Rule #1</b>	<b>Rule #2</b>	<b>Rule #3</b>
“Teachers set firm limits in loving ways without anger, lectures, threats, or repeated warnings.”	People learn from their own decisions. “When students misbehave and cause problems, teachers hand these problems back in loving ways.”	“Teachers share control in the classroom by providing students with choices.”
☺ Adults set limits using enforceable statements.	☺ Adults provide empathy before describing consequences.	☺ Teachers provide choices within limits.
☺ Adults regard mistakes as learning opportunities.	☺ Adults use very few words and consistent loving actions.	☺ Ninety percent of choices should be given when things are going well.
☺ Adults resist the temptation to <i>hassle</i> .	☺ Adults delay consequences, when necessary, so that they can respond with wisdom and compassion.	☺ Never offer one choice you like and one that you don’t.
☺ Adults take great care of themselves.	☺ Children are provided with opportunities to own and solve their problems.	☺ Don’t disguise threats as choices.
Adapted from Fay, J. (1995) <i>Teaching with Love and Logic</i> . Golden, Colorado: Love and Logic Press		

## **Four Key Principles of Love and Logic**

The four key principles of *Love and Logic* provide practical skills that make implementing the “three basic rules” into any classroom easy. When used consistently these principles provide students with an environment that meets their personal needs for predictability, love, acceptance, and control.

### ***The Enhancement of Self-Concept (I am loved and capable)***

*Love and Logic* states that our behavior is a manifestation of whom we believe ourselves to be and that this behavior is directly influenced by what we believe other people think of us. Therefore, teachers should always consider how their words and actions may influence the self-concept of others.

Self-concept has two main characteristics: 1.) It is fragile and easily broken. 2.) It is cautious and resistant to change. To maintain and protect how we view ourselves people create defensive mechanisms. When achievement is seen as separate from the self, there are fewer negative side effects on self-concept. However, when achievement becomes a measure of self-worth, student performance can take a turn for the worst. To establish or maintain self-concept people need to know that they are loved unconditionally. In other words, teachers need to “unconditionally accept the worthy person, even while rejecting the questionable behavior” (Fay, 1995, p.129).

People should also know more about their strengths than their weaknesses. “We do not want kids to ignore what they need to work on, but if they do not learn what their strengths are, their weaknesses become defeat.” (Fay, 1995, p.130). This quote has strong personal significance to me. Beginning in fourth grade and throughout high school I struggled with the ability to share my writing with others. To avoid sharing, and in hopes of disguising my insecurities, I developed strategies. For example, I remember a situation in fourth grade when I flat out refused to read my paper aloud and when the teacher tried to force me, I crumpled the paper and put it in my mouth. It’s funny; I saw this strategy more appealing than simply reading my paper. No matter, the strategy worked; I was sent to time out and never had to read my paper. I was never held accountable, no one ever tried to understand the motives behind my actions, and my weakness became my defeat. If my teacher had worked from a *Love and Logic* perspective she would have first attempted to build a relationship and discover the reason for by behavior, i.e. which need was not being met.

Next, students need to feel that they can control consequences by managing their behavior. In order for kids to learn, they need to be held accountable. “Learning from consequences is a struggle that can cause pain, but surviving the struggle is a great self-concept builder. We learn we are capable” (Fay, 1995, p.131). *Love and Logic* provides very straight forward and easy techniques to maintain and change self-concept:

- Non-verbal communication can be powerful. Use appropriate eye contact, smiles, and touch. These will help you bond with your students.
- Allow kids to own their feelings. Example: Instead of always saying “I’m so proud of you.” Say, “You can be proud of that.”
- Let the consequences do the teaching. Not lecturing, yelling, punishing or humiliating.

- Find things that are unique about each student and share them with him/her. Example: “I’ve noticed that you really like to draw pictures when you read.” Don’t end the statement with a value or judgment ... “and that’s great.”

### ***Shared Control (I am needed and capable)***

Many teachers manage their classroom with the idea that students need to be controlled. As teachers we need to ask, “Do I want to control kids or do I want to obtain their cooperation?” Most would say they wish to obtain cooperation; however, many times our actions impart control. When teachers attempt to control or force their students to do things they often meet resistance. *Love and Logic* believes that one way to gain cooperation is by sharing control. Shared control is accomplished when teachers provide students with small choices throughout the day. These choices should be fairly simple. For example:

- Do you want to read your book on the floor or your seat?
- You can either turn your homework in on Thursday or Friday.
- You can choose topic one, two or three for your paper.
- You have a choice, would you like the lights on or off?

(For more guidelines on providing choices in your classroom see chart #1 Three Basic Rules.) *Love and Logic* also describes choices as making “deposits in the bank.” The idea behind this is that when students feel they have control in the classroom on a regular basis they are less likely to resist when the teacher needs to make a “withdrawal” of control. Margi, a kindergarten teacher, sees “the ultimate goal of providing choices as a way to guide students in making ‘good’ choices and to internalize the idea that life is full of decision that will have consequences.” (Brooks, M, personal communication, February 10, 2008).

### ***Consequences with Empathy (Predictability, I am loved and capable)***

In order for personal change to occur students need to feel pain. *Love and Logic* describes pain in two different forms: pain that comes from without and pain that comes from within. “People who hurt from the inside and recognize that they have caused their own pain tend to react differently from people who feel something or someone else has caused their pain” (Fay, 1995, p.158). In order to create change the student must own his/her pain rather than blaming it on the adult. To accomplish this *Love and Logic* created a process that involves providing consequences with empathy. The process is broken down into 4 components.

- 1.) Identify the problem.
- 2.) Identify whose problem it is. This is important because teachers often get sucked into solving their students’ problems, i.e. teacher becomes upset when their students act up for a sub.
- 3.) Show empathy. When someone empathizes with us they show they care. Empathy can validate the person without condoning the behavior or feeling. Further, it is difficult to transfer blame to someone who legitimately feels sad for you.
- 4.) Offer a positive relationship message.

Situation: A fourth grade student is sitting in class carving into her desk. Teacher: STEP ONE: Teacher walks over to the student and makes an empathetic statement. “Oh man, that’s too bad. This is sad.” “I’m going to have to do something about this...but not now. I’ll give it some thought and talk to you later. Go ahead and go to recess and try not to think about it right now.” Of course this last comment ensures that the student does think about it. While the students are

out to recess let the principal know what happened, find out how much a desk costs and tell the principal your plan. Call parents and let them know your plan so that they can follow your lead. STEP TWO: When you are able to talk with the student again provide empathy “This is sad, you destroyed school property and now we are short one desk. What do you think you are going to do to solve this problem?” STEP THREE: When she shrugs her shoulders, ask, “Would you like to hear what some other kids try?” STEP FOUR: Provide two or three solutions. For example: “Some kids work for the janitor after school cleaning toilets until the desk is paid off. Then after each solution say, “How will that work for you?” Have the student write out her plan of action. Talk to parents about holding their student accountable and not paying the debt for them. (If you see this as being a difficult task *Love and Logic* provides techniques for parent communication.) STEP FIVE: Give the “power message.” Say, “Good luck. If anybody could solve a problem like this, I know it would be you!” Then walk away. If providing empathy with consequences is going to be effective the adult must always apply the technique in a way that is respectful and sincere.

Norma, a second grade teacher, states, “Providing empathy with consequences has helped many of my student make real change. My students stop and think now; they feel good about themselves because when they do something ‘wrong’ they know they can fix it” (Woodward, N., personal communication, February 10, 2008).

### ***Shared Thinking (I am capable)***

“Our most powerful tool is interaction dynamics, made up of two equally important parts: asking questions and modeling” (Fay, 1995, p.175). To be effective, questions need to be straightforward and logical and not phrased as put-downs. Moreover, they should always be presented with calm interest. Maggie, a special education teacher stated that, “When I approach behavioral situations with questions the conversation never turns into an argument. In fact, most of my students, if given time, will come to the same conclusion that I would have” (Monaghan, M., personal communication, February 15, 2008).

Consider this situation. A student walks in the room yelling how he hates the school and all the teachers in it. Now consider the following two responses. Teacher: (In a similar loud voice.) You can’t come in here talking like that. Either be quiet or get out! Teacher 2: (In a tone she wants the kid to model.) “Sounds like you’re pretty mad. I’ll be glad to visit with you when we are both calm. Would you rather cool off in the room or out in the designated ‘time out’ space?” The first response is asking for a head-to-head battle and a student who will now blame you for his anger; whereas the second teacher response provides empathy and a chance for the student to calm down and think. Questions can empower the student to make better choices. Furthermore, “when we engage in thinking, we demonstrate to ourselves that we are capable” (Fay, 1995, p.178).

### **Conclusion: Using Love and Logic in the Classroom**

Through *Love and Logic* I have found effective classroom solutions for preventing disruptive behavior and teaching responsibility. These techniques are simple, practical, and easy to learn. After practicing Love and Logic at home, with my son, I am confident in my ability to use these techniques in ways that will improve my classroom management.

To help me apply and make *Love and Logic* a habit I have created a plan by following some simple tips provided by *Love and Logic*.

**Tip #1** Keep it simple. I will pick just one “Love and Logic one-liner” to neutralize arguing. I will pick just one “Empathetic Statement.”

**Tip #2** I will plan ahead by writing down what I will say.  
Write down the actual choices, enforceable statements, and one-liner ahead of time.

**Tip #3** Apply one Love and Logic technique at a time. When I am comfortable I will add another technique.

**Tip #4** I will listen to and read my Love and Logic audio/book over and over.  
Love and Logic reports that, the average person must listen to the same audio six to eight times before he/she really knows it well.

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## Craving Conflict

Justin Becker

...conflict is inherently neither positive nor negative but rather is an inevitable consequence of the natural process of change and growth.

-Corcoran and Mallinchrodt, 2000, p. 473

### The Why

I delved into this project with the following questions:

- How does communication influence classroom management and interactions among teachers and students?
- What is the impact of language on communication?
- Are there alternative methods of conflict resolution that encourage the development of positive relationships in the classroom? What do they look and sound like in the classroom?
- Is nonviolent communication a viable technique for classroom management and conflict resolution?

This is the framework for my study. My background in classroom management techniques emphasized a gamut of preventive, supportive, and corrective elements, and I felt compelled to add to the preventive category of this spectrum. Also, I wanted to study language and communication strategies that aligned with my educational philosophy. Within this philosophy, I understand that students (and teachers) construct meaning from experience, and that this meaning is tied directly to the relationships that students have with their peers, with teachers and administrators, and with the wider community in which they reside. I included empathy and perspective-taking within my philosophy as well, both of which are skills that I deem essential to developing a democratic and equitable classroom community. So, with the above questions framing this project, a subsequent question formed in my mind:

- How can conflict, which I view as natural and ever-present, be exploited constructively in order to develop students' awareness of and ability to use empathy and perspective-taking in their academic and social endeavors?

*I see conflict everywhere I turn. Conflict is in instantaneous, irrepressible, and irrational anger directed at the other driver on his cell phone. Conflict is in languishing weeks between check-in phone calls home. Conflict is in an unexpectedly empty jar of coffee beans. Conflict is in the hiss of air rapidly leaking from a spent tire. Conflict is in a looming deadline, a lost call, and a parole meeting. Conflict is everywhere.*

### Assumptions and Beliefs

First, I assume the existence of conflict in classrooms and schools. Students, guardians, teachers, support staff, administrators, and community members strive and struggle to fulfill physical, social, emotional, psychological, and professional needs, needs that evolve and change from moment to moment. Classrooms, for their daily habit of confining young humans together, provide fertile ground for various forms of conflict to emerge. Educators are duty-bound to ensure a safe learning space for all students. So what happens when conflict occurs? What role

does the teacher have in resolving the conflict? What of the students involved in the conflict? What of the bystander peers? What of administrators? Guardians? If classrooms and hallways are sites of hourly mini-earthquakes, are there best practices for developing conflict resolution skills? For whom?

Second, I believe that conflict can, and will, be addressed and resolved in a variety of ways. This project focuses on methods of conflict resolution, such as nonviolent communication and peer mediation, which emphasize the development of interaction skills. These skills include empathy, emotional intelligence, and perspective-taking, all of which stimulate an opportunity inherent in conflict to collaborate and build relationships.

Finally, I believe that conflict breeds within and across difference. Thus, resolving conflict aligns with the core of my educational philosophy – *all* students are unique, *all* students understand and act upon the world from unique perspectives, and *all* students navigate their ships of roles, interests, and expectations using unique landmarks.

### **How Does Communication Influence Classroom Management and Interactions Among Students and Teachers?**

Classroom guidance. Communication is central to how the classroom community forms, norms, storms, and performs – expectations, responsibilities, guidelines, assumptions, and biases are all communicated through verbal and nonverbal language. Yet what I observe in classrooms, in terms of how students interact with one another, teachers, and content, reflects a very different focus. That focus is on following the rules, obeying teacher and school mandates, paying dues to the test-makers. I observe communication as one-way, flowing from the power-full to the powerless. My beacon, my magnetic North, is characterized by a “balance of individual freedoms and shared power” (Landau, 2004, p. 14). Communication is multifaceted, providing input from many different stakeholders, a group that includes students, guardians, teachers, principals, and librarians. Communication also involves the affective realm, emphasizing the emotional give-and-take of social interactions.

**Exercise – *Creative Listening*** (Macbeth & Fine, 1995, p. 41)

Description: A creative listening exercise in pairs.

Aims: To encourage individuals to listen attentively, without judgment and without imposing their own agenda.

Directions:

1. (3 minutes) Work in pairs. Partners sit directly opposite each other, at a comfortable distance. One of them speaks about an experience where communication between themselves and another person was successful, effective, and satisfactory. The other just sits still and listens, refraining from any kind of response, verbal or bodily. (There should be no nodding or approval, for instance.) There is no feedback when the first partner finishes speaking.
2. (3 minutes) The two partners now swap roles, and the listener has a turn at speaking.
3. (6 minutes) The first speaker now describes an experience in which communication broke down or was unsuccessful and unsatisfactory. Then the partners swap roles again, and the exercise ends when both have spoken twice and listened twice.

Feedback and Discussion: (8 minutes) There are many questions that you might want to ask participants. Was it easy to just sit and listen? Did you want to participate by asking questions, making comments, passing judgments, agreeing or disagreeing? Did you find it difficult not to

think these things while the other person was talking? What did it feel like to be listened to without interruption? Did you want more interaction? Are you used to being listened to in this manner? Did you want feedback afterwards? Were you eager for discussion afterwards? Is this type of listening useful? In what circumstances? What did this exercise tell you about the way you normally listen to others? Do you consider yourself a good listener?

Notes: Creative listening means creating the space for someone else to talk and to be simply listened to, without any comment or judgment. The simple willingness to listen is itself an aspect of creative listening.

Skills: Listening. Concentration. Expression.

*Yet in conflict is opportunity. In conflict is potential energy waiting, yearning, to be released. In conflict is a shared experience, and an interaction. In conflict is substance, struggle, and growth. In conflict is misunderstanding, misconception, and...Mr. Rogers?! "I'd like to be your neighbor?!"*

*"I'd like to be your neighbor."*

*"I'd like to be by your side."*

*"I'd like to see things from your perspective."*

*"I'd like to know how you understand the world and the roles you fulfill."*

*"I'd like to listen to you."*

*"I'd like to hear you."*

*"I'd like to be your neighbor."*

### **What Is the Impact of Language on Communication?**

The message I wish to communicate depends on the words I use, how my body is situated, the time of day, my relationship with the other person, my tone of voice, my facial expression, and the physical location of the conversation, among other factors. Students speak different languages other than my own mother tongue. My question, then, has to do with empathy – is the ability to empathize, to feel *with* rather than feel *for*, a universal aptitude? My answer is yes, that all humans, across the vast array of experience, can learn this skill. However, I also believe that this ability relies upon a common language, upon common vocabulary, patience, and familiarity with a process. Kreidler (1984) sees conflict escalation as a result of poor communication, which occurs when students are not provided the language nor the forum for expressing or explaining their intentions, understanding, perceptions, assumptions, and feelings.

***Exercise – Conflict Vocabulary Chart*** (Kreidler, 1984, p. 60)

Grades 2-6

Materials: chart paper, marking pen or crayon

Procedure:

1. Make a conflict vocabulary chart. Each time you add a word to the chart, write it on the board also, and have the class read it and try to explain what it means. Then discuss the meaning as it relates to the conflict, and elicit examples from the children's lives.
2. Give certain terms special treatment, explaining their subtleties or relating them to creative conflict resolution.
  - apologize (admit) – To say something like "I'm sorry; I was wrong."

- apologize (explain) – To say something like “I’m sorry this happened” when giving an explanation that clears up a misunderstanding. One need not have been in the wrong to apologize in this sense.
- compromise – A resolution in which each person gives up something to reach a satisfying agreement. Point out to the kids that, although compromise is often necessary, it is in fact a lose-lose resolution.
- escalate, de-escalate – Kids love these words. Make up a list of things that might cause a conflict to escalate or de-escalate.
- resources, needs, values – Relate these terms to the causes of conflict.
- aggression – behavior aimed at harming another.

### **Language and Verbal Conflicts (Lee, Pulvino, & Perrone, 1998, pp. 25-35)**

The following categories of verbal conflicts will not automatically escalate. The authors emphasize that the conflicts result from a combination of verbal and nonverbal language, including body language and tone of voice.

- **Imposing contracts** (“You have to...”, “You will...”, “You can’t...”)
- **Warnings and threats** (“If you don’t..., then...”, “You had better..., or else...”)
- **Moralizing and preaching** (“You should...”, “You ought to...”, “Have you...yet?”)
- **Giving advice and suggesting solutions** (“I want you to try...”, “You need to...”)
- **Arguing and persuading** (“Yes, but...”, “Well, you did(n’t)...”)
- **Judging, criticizing, and blaming** (“You aren’t thinking maturely”, “You don’t know what you’re talking about”)
- **Praising and agreeing** (*sarcastically*, “Well, you must know it all”)
- **Ridiculing and name-calling**
- **Analyzing and diagnosing** (“You just like to pick on people”, “You don’t really mean that!”)
- **Probing and questioning** (“Why did you...”, “How did this get started?”)

**NOTE:** These categories are of POTENTIAL verbal conflict, and if you use them to inform or reflect on actual practices, be aware that the examples used depend on SARCASM and DISMISSIVE body language and tone of voice.

*I’d like to sit at the table with Conflict, see how it thrives, understand the ingredients that make it taste so bitter and so normal, so commonplace, so much like far too many servings of apple pie. Conflict is fast food, Slow Food, and everything in between. Conflict is the elephant looming expectantly. This is what I crave, so why is my mouth so dry?*

### **Is Nonviolent Communication a Viable Technique for Classroom Management and Conflict Resolution?**

My first experience with nonviolent communication occurred, isolated, in the form of a workshop titled *Nurturing Peace in a Violent World: An Educator’s Workshop on Nonviolent Communication*. Everything I knew about NVC going into this project stemmed from this workshop. I learned a bit about emotional intelligence, perspective taking, empathy, and NVC. I understood NVC as the form of conflict resolution, an understanding which has since transformed. Now, NVC is one method of conflict resolution, a technique that, from my perspective, follows a strict formula of listening, empathizing, and searching for the underlying needs associated with the feelings articulated and implied by another person. Emotional



Throughout the practicum, I wondered what nonviolent communication might look like in the classroom. I felt especially skeptical of using this type of language with adolescent students. Could this be modified? How could the model of nonviolent communication, as offered by Marshall Rosenberg via Liv Monroe, be modified or adapted to nestle with the schema of older students? In any case, what might nonviolent communication look like in a classroom?

*I have been compiling recipes, crafting a cookbook of teaching strategies and materials designed to stimulate cognition and disposition in my future students. The recipe for addressing conflict in the classroom, however, can hardly be described as such. A more appropriate metaphor portrays conflict as an ever-present ingredient in the classroom community. With an understanding of conflict as part and parcel of human interaction, my ability and motivation to address the seemingly incompatible wants and needs of individuals begins to focus on constructive methods of conflict resolution.*

### **NVC in Action – Classroom**

I followed a lead offered by Liv Monroe, finding myself in room 205 at Meadows Elementary to speak with 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teacher Paul Johnson. Paul has passed the two-year benchmark, striding into spring with the language of giraffes and jackals by his side. *What does nonviolent communication look like in the classroom*, I wondered. Some of the questions I had for Paul included: *Why do you feel it important to implement NVC in your classroom? What are some of the skills students are learning through the NVC curriculum you use? Do students use these skills outside of the classroom?* (The last question seemed most pertinent to my project and what I hoped to find out – are the skills that students can learn through conflict resolution methods applicable and transferable to the social realm outside of the classroom? For middle- and high-school students especially, what are incentives for using an alternative to verbal or physical violence?)

Every week, for two days, students in Paul’s classroom participate in Mysterious Mammals, his title for the circle activity that teaches nonviolent communication techniques. I sat in the circle with the students, who each had a laminated cue card to be used during one’s turn. This card included: emotional vocabulary (different feelings words) and needs vocabulary (security, friendship, respect, fun, laughter, organization). All of the students participated in the “compliment circle,” and all referred to a card during the check-in. For example, “I want to thank (another student) for (specific action). It made me feel (feeling word) because I need (need word).” If a student did not feel ready, they could pass for the moment, and would be given an opportunity on the second go-round. At the end, and if time allowed, Paul would open up the circle to concern cards that students had submitted to the concern/meeting time folder on the wall.

Following this activity, during the reading portion of the afternoon, I followed up on the compliment circle with three students who had participated and who were familiar with the language and the process of Mysterious Mammals:

“What is this giraffe talk stuff?”

- “You say, I notice, I need, I feel...”
- “If there’s a problem, you use giraffe talk instead of fighting.”
- “The giraffe looks sympathetic, and has sympathetic things to say.”
- “I think I can take her place for a second...”
- “I’m the only left-handed person in class, and I feel left out sometimes...”

The students used the language of nonviolent communication, and provided examples of when the technique might be appropriate at school and at home. However, they also said that sometimes giraffe talk didn't work so well because not all of the students at the school had been taught the language.

Paul **critiqued** the format of nonviolent communication before the students arrived, briefly touching upon the seemingly strict formula encouraged by Marshall Rosenberg and local trainers in NVC. I also observed during the compliment circle that there were no safeguards against leaving students out of the process – though all were tasked with sending a compliment, there seemed to be many who did not receive one. What the students said about peers who had not been trained in the language of giraffe talk also seemed a drawback to a wider effectiveness of the method.

***How can conflict, which I view as natural and ever-present, be exploited constructively in order to develop students' awareness of and ability to use empathy and perspective-taking in their academic and social endeavors? Or, what should I do when conflict beckons?***

I want to use the phrase, "Ultimately, conflict and conflict resolution comes down to..." and finish with a definitive noun. However, I've not reached this point. In fact, I hope that I maintain a flexibility in my understanding of conflict, see the opportunity in every heated moment where perspectives are at an impasse. So, a checklist? Maybe. A set of guidelines? OK.

- Become aware of your own conflict management style(s) (forcing, avoiding, compromising, accommodating, collaborating).
- Study different models for conflict resolution (nonviolent communication, peer mediation, violence prevention)
- Encourage democratic forms of classroom guidance (shared power, shared decision-making, unconditional positive regard)
- Seek a network of teaching professionals who have implemented conflict resolution techniques in their own classrooms – what worked? What were some challenges? Who else is doing this?

**No matter what manifestations of conflict occur in the classroom...**

"He stole my pencil!"

"*Somebody* is being a b----."

"Don't tell me what to do!"

"Oh, I'll be sure to get right on that."

"Sarah started it!"

"You need to calm down right now."

"I THINK YOU SHOULD..."

"I NEED YOU TO..."

"WHY DIDN'T YOU..."

"YOU'RE JUST BEING..."

...it is how we respond that matters.

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## Using Art Projects to Support Mathematics Teaching

Rachel Bishop

### Introduction

When people learn that I am to become a math teacher they usually have one of two reactions. They tell me either: *that's great, we need more good math teachers*, or, *I am no good at math*. These two reactions are indicative of the condition of math teaching and math learning in the country. Too many people have not had access to quality math teaching, and do not feel capable with the subject.

We know from research what makes for quality math teaching, and the National Council for Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) has adopted principles in accordance with this knowledge. Students learn math best when they have the opportunity to engage with mathematical concepts, explore multiple representations, and construct their own understanding of the mathematics that they study (National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, 2000). Math teaching is changing in this direction as more and more school districts adapt conceptually based math curricula. But still, too often, practice is not in line with what is known about quality math teaching.

I chose this project because teaching math in a way that is fun, engaging, and conceptually focused is my goal as a teacher. I think using art projects would be one strategy to do this. I believe students who are not traditionally interested or successful in mathematics may find art projects “an in” to the subject, and I believe that using art projects could enhance all students understanding of math concepts.

There are many connections between the fields of mathematics and art, and therefore many ways to integrate the two disciplines. Because I am a math teacher I have chosen to focus not on the integration of the subjects, but on ways that art can support math teaching. Therefore, I have focused on lessons and projects that would enhance some math concept that I would be likely to teach in the secondary math classroom.

For the project I had two goals. The first is: What the justification for using art projects to support math teaching. Do art projects really increase student engagement and learning in the math classroom? To address this I used the NCTM website as well as the ERIC database to collect relevant academic literature. I also interviewed three math teachers who have used art projects in their classrooms. The second goal was to create a collection of quality lesson outlines that would be appropriate for a secondary math classroom. For this I collected ideas from the teachers that I interviewed, as well as from the academic literature, and from teacher resource websites.

### Academic Literature

Mathematical knowledge has been furthered most by people with the “power of intuition.” (Louis Ferriera Nascimento, & Barco, 2007). Because students are often only taught math as a series of algorithms to manipulate numbers in various ways, they do not recognize that doing math is really a creative endeavor. They also do not recognize that math is a powerful tool for understanding the world and possesses inherent beauty. Using mathematical art projects is one way to help students broaden their understanding of what mathematics truly is, and to help them gain an appreciation for the subject.

Mathematical art projects are also an opportunity to engage students of different learning styles. Students who are visual or tactile learners may not connect easily to mathematics. Through doing art projects these students find access to the subject. Additionally, using art projects in the math classroom may further challenge analytical students who may already excel in math class. Art projects are also a fun way to add variety into the math classroom and may prove to be very memorable to students.

In the academic literature, these benefits are well agreed upon. But the question remains: will using art projects actually enhance students understanding of mathematics? Unfortunately, it appears that very little research has been done to investigate this question. Only two of the references found mentioned any kind of research supporting the use of art projects to enhance students mathematical understanding. One action research Masters Project found that fourth grade students who participated in 16 weeks of math themed art class increased had a substantial increase in their mathematics knowledge from pretest to posttest. This study did not however include a control group (Hanson, 2002). Another article references a study that found the students in 81 out of 121 classes using art-themed math lessons improved in their mathematical understanding compared to only 21 out of 147 control group classrooms (Phillips & Bickley-Green, 1998). However the article was not a full write up of the research study and it was unclear where this research came from.

The limited research available, as well as the knowledge of the benefits of conceptually based math teaching and curriculum integration, suggest that using art projects should certainly help further students' understanding of mathematics. How then does this compare to the actual experiences of teachers using art projects in their mathematics classrooms?

### **Teacher Interviews**

When interviewing the teachers I focused on three main questions: *Do mathematical art projects help you students become more engaged in class? Do they help you students to learn math? What challenges and suggestions can you share regarding using mathematical art projects?*

All three teachers were math teachers, two at the high school level and one at the middle school level. All had used art projects in their classes and one was specifically teaching an art themed math class.

All three teachers agreed that using art projects would help students be more engaged with math class. One teacher mentioned that giving them something to touch and do helps them make a connections in their brains. Another teacher mentioned how art projects specifically engage kinesthetic learners. The teachers felt that art projects did not just engage the students with that assignment, but with the course as a whole. Through doing something fun and working together in groups a positive climate was created in the class, and that helped students be engaged even with more traditional math tasks. Teachers also found that that their students' appreciation for math increased as they saw a broader range of what math can do.

The teachers also felt that using art projects helped students to understand math concepts. For example, one teacher described an assignment in which students designed a cereal box to hold a given volume of cereal. She said that the students got really into decorating their boxes. But they also really came to understand dimensions and volume through the process of designing and building the shape.

When asked about the challenges of using art projects in the math classroom, all three teachers responded strongly that the biggest challenge was finding the time. The teachers

expressed that math projects were often eliminated because of all the content they were required to cover. One teacher pointed out that using a project to teach a math concept takes a lot longer than just teaching a lesson on the topic. Other challenges mentioned by the teachers were: keeping students on schedule during longer term projects, the cost of supplies, and ensuring that the projects were related to the math being taught and not just craft projects.

For teachers wishing to use mathematical art projects, one teacher suggested being very clear about assessment. Students need to know that, although these projects are fun, they are not just for fun. The focus is always the math and students will be expected to explain the math they used. Teachers can share their grading rubric with students so students know exactly what aspects of their project will be assessed.

In addition, the teachers shared many projects, lessons, and resources they have used, some of which have informed my lesson outlines to follow. I wish to express great thanks to the teachers I spoke with for sharing their ideas and resources.

### **Lesson Outlines**

The following lesson outlines are a synthesis of ideas from the teachers I interviewed, the academic literature, and teacher resource websites. They are not complete lesson plans as the implementation of these projects would really vary depending on the scope and sequence of a course. The lesson outlines include learning goals, EALRs addressed, assessment ideas, and learning activities. The mathematical art projects included are:

Ratios and Scaling  
Translation and Rotation Flip Books  
Graphing Pictures  
Pattern Squares  
Room Layout and Design  
Geometry Research Project

#### ***Ratios and Scaling***

**Lesson Overview** In this lesson students will use ratios to create a larger scale drawing of an image. Each student is given a small piece of a larger image so when students are finished their work can be pieced together and the larger image can be displayed.

Students could be challenged to find a way to scale up the picture as an introduction to the concept of using ratios and growth factors, or the lesson could serve as review and practice for students who have already worked with these concepts.

**Learning Outcomes** Students will calculate ratios and growth factors.  
Students will use ratios and growth factors to increase the scale of an image.

**EALRs Addressed** EALR: 1. The student understands and applies the concepts and procedures of mathematics.

Component: 1.1 Understand and apply concepts and procedures from number sense.

Grade 6: 1.1.4 Understand the concepts of [ratio](#) and percent.

Grade 7: 1.1.4 Understand the concept of [direct proportion](#).

Grade 8: 1.1.4 Apply the concepts of ratio, [percent](#), and [direct proportion](#).

**Possible Assessments** Depending on when this project is placed in a unit, pre-assessments, and summative assessments will vary. Assessments options include a traditional paper and pencil test. Problems with an authentic context could be used to determine if students can transfer their skills using ratios to novel situations. This activity could also itself serve as an assessment of whether students understand and can use ratios.

Formative assessment: While students are working teacher goes around and checks that students are on track. Teacher asks students to describe how they determined how large each piece of the picture should be.

**Learning Experiences** Preparation: Teacher chooses a postcard or other picture and cuts it into small squares. Larger square papers are also prepared for students. The larger papers must be an integer ratio in size. (Ex: if giving students 1 square inch pieces of the picture, an 8in x 8in paper would require them to calculate ratios with a growth factor of 8.) For lesson students will need rulers, colored pencils, and possibly calculators.

Teacher introduces activity by giving each student a small piece of picture. Explain to class that they will be enlarging the picture. Teacher can use this as an introduction to using ratios and go on to discuss the concept of ratios, or if students have already studied ratios, ask a student to demonstrate how to use ratios to scale up a piece of the picture.

Assign students to scale up their pictures. They also need to write a paragraph explaining the math they used to scale the picture.

Once students are finished pictures are collected and pieced together on the wall. Students can now see the original large picture. Also ask some students to share the paragraph they wrote about the mathematics they used.

### ***Translation and Rotation Flip Books***

**Lesson Overview** For this project students will create flip books that show movement. They will describe the movements mathematically as transformations and rotations.

**Learning** Students will demonstrate their understanding of translations and

**Outcomes** transformations.

**EALRs Addressed** EALR: 1. The student understands and applies the concepts and procedures of mathematics.  
Component: 1.3 Understand and apply concepts and procedures from geometric sense.

Grade 8: 1.3.4 Apply a [combination](#) of [translations](#), reflections, and/or [rotations](#) to 2-dimensional [figures](#).

Grade 9: 1.3.4 Apply [multiple transformations](#): [translations](#), reflections, and/or [rotations](#) to 2-dimensional [figures](#).

**Possible Assessments** This lesson probably best fits as a culminating project after studying translations and rotations. It could be used as a performance assessment to determine what students have learned about translations and transformations.

**Learning Experiences** This project is probably best introduced by showing students examples of the completed project. Explain to students that they will be creating flip books that show with movement showing the translations and rotations they have been studying. Hand out assignment sheet with details requirements of projects and grading rubric.

Students use index cards to create their flip books. Graph paper can be glued to each page so students can easily draw their pictures so that only the parts that they want to have moved. Students create their flip books and also must write up an explanation of the translations and rotations that are shown in their book.

Possible project requirements:

Your flip book must have at least 10 pages.

Your flip book must show at least one translation and one rotation.

Your flip book must be accompanied by an mathematical explanation.

When students have finished this project it may be desirable to have a gallery time and allow them to share their finished books with each other.

### *Graphing Pictures*

**Lesson Overview** Students draw pictures on graph paper, and then translate those pictures into mathematical notation. This activity with any level of students doing coordinate graphing. Students who have learned to graph points can create dot-to-dot pictures. Students who can graph linear relationships can incorporate straight lines into their pictures. Students who have learned to graph functions that curve can incorporate curves into their pictures.

**Learning Outcomes** Students will practice or demonstrate their graphing skills. Students will turn a picture into mathematical notation. Students will create a picture from its mathematical notation.

**EALRs Addressed** EALR: 1. The student understands and applies the concepts and procedures of mathematics.  
Component: 1.3 Understand and apply concepts and procedures from geometric sense.

Grade 7: 1.3.3 Describe the [location](#) of [points](#) on a coordinate [grid](#) in any of the four [quadrants](#)

Grade 8: 1.3.3 Describe the relative position of [points](#) on a coordinate [grid](#).

Grade 9: 1.3.3 Use geometric properties to determine and plot [points](#) on a coordinate [grid](#).

EALR: 4. The student communicates knowledge and understanding in both everyday and mathematical language.

Component: 4.2 Organize, represent, and share information.

Grade 6 & 7: 4.2.2 [Represent](#) numerical, measurement, geometric, probability, and/or statistical information in [graphs](#) or other appropriate forms.

Grade 8: 4.2.2 [Represent](#) numerical, measurement, geometric, probability, statistical, and/or algebraic information in [graphs](#) or other appropriate forms.

Grade 9: 4.2.2 [Represent](#) mathematical information in [graphs](#) or other appropriate forms.

**Possible Assessments** This assignment could be used as practice in writing coordinates and equations and graphing them, or it could be used to assess students who have studied these concepts. This assignment should be assessed for student's mathematical accuracy. Do their points and equations match the picture they have drawn? Are they able to take the points and equations from another student and turn them into a picture?

**Learning Experiences** Teacher could introduce this lesson to students by connecting to the animation in video games and movies. Explain to students that when animation is done on computers, the programmers use math to describe each part of the picture you see. The computer then takes the equations the programmer has written and turns them into a picture. For this assignment students will do something similar.

Before students work to create their own pictures teacher gives a teacher created one on which to practice. Students must take the equations the teacher has given and draw them to find the picture. Once students have

successful completed this they may create their own picture. Students draw pictures on coordinate graphs. Depending level of graphing students are familiar with they may use points, lines, or curves. Once students have finished this, teacher collects them. The next day teacher redistributes the directions the students have written. Students must try to recreate the picture given the directions.

### *Patterned Squares*

**Lesson Overview** This lesson is based on a lesson described in the article “Just Five Does It: Using Five Numbers to Make Pattern Squares” from the journal *Mathematics Teaching in the Middle School* (Kenny, 2007). This lesson addresses math process rather than math content. Students create designs given different sets of five numbers and look for patterns to predict the shape the designs will take.

**Learning Outcomes** Students will find, describe patterns. Students will justify conclusions based on the patterns they observe. Students will reflect on what it means to do math.

**EALRs Addressed** EALR: 3. The student uses mathematical reasoning.  
Component: 3.1 Analyze information.  
Component: 3.2 Conclude.  
Component: 3.3 Verify results.

Grade 6-8: 3.1.1 [Analyze](#) numerical, [measurement](#), geometric, [probability](#), and/or statistical information from a variety of sources.

3.2.1 Draw and [support conclusions](#). 3.2.2 Evaluate selection and implementation of procedures and conclusions in various situations. 3.3.1 [Justify](#) results using evidence. 3.3.2 Evaluate reasonableness of results. 3.3.3 [Validate](#) thinking about numerical, [measurement](#), geometric, [probability](#), and/or statistical ideas.

**Possible Assessments** I would use this lesson at the beginning of a course to get students thinking about what it means to do math. As an assessment students could be asked to write up a statement of their findings about the patterns they investigated. They could also be asked to reflect in writing on what it means to do math.

**Learning Experiences** Students are shown how to draw a pattern square given five integers. On graph paper students draw a line segment the length of the first integer. They then turn left 90 degrees, and draw a line segment the length of the second integer. They continue in this manner turning left each time. Once the sequence of five integers has been completed a dot is drawn, then the process is repeated from this point. Once the sequence has been repeated five times the drawing should have returned to the place where it started and the “pattern square” is complete.

Once students understand the procedure of drawing the pattern square, give groups of students list of various five integer sequences. In their groups students draw pattern squares based on these sequences and may also design sequences of their

own.

Once a sufficient number of pattern squares have been drawn challenge students to look for patterns and predict what a pattern square will look like just given the numbers. If students struggle with making predictions have a group or two come up and share their findings to model this process.

Ask students to reflect on the type of thinking they are doing. They are not just following procedures to solve a problem. Instead they are looking for patterns, and figuring out how things work. Explain that this is what doing math really is, and this is what will be expected of them in their class.

Student can also color their pattern squares and a color square quilt can be created from the collection of them and displayed in the classroom.

### ***Room Layout and Design***

**Lesson Overview** Students design the layout of a room. They use their knowledge of area to decide how much furniture will fit, how much paint the need, ect.

**Learning Outcomes** Students will find area given the dimensions of an object. Students will use their knowledge of area to solve problems.

**EALRs Addressed** EALR: 1. The student understands and applies the concepts and procedures of mathematics.  
Component: 1.2 Understand and apply concepts and procedures from measurement.

Grade 6: 1.2.1 Understand the concepts of [surface area](#) and [volume](#) of [rectangular prisms](#). 1.2.2 Understand the [differences](#) between area ([square](#)) units and volume (cubic) units.

**Possible Assessments** Students will be assessed on their completion of the project and on their mathematical accuracy. Along with a drawing or model of their room, they need to create a mathematical write up of the calculations they did.

**Learning Experiences** This assignment can be modified to fit the students' level. An assignment sheet is prepared for students that lists all the criteria for the room they are to design. The assignment sheet can include a list of furniture and decorative options for students to choose, or students can research the actually cost and size of the items of their choice.

Students draw the design of their room and calculate the cost for the design they have created. Students write up a sheet that shows all their calculations and the cost for each element of their design. An outline of this cost sheet can be prepared for

students to fill in.

### ***Geometry Research Project***

- Lesson Overview** This is not really a lesson but an independent project in geometry applications. Students research geometry and the relationships to an area of interest to them. They produce a research paper and an art piece about their topic, and present them to the class.
- Learning Outcomes** Students will investigate how math connects to other subjects and real world situations. Students will communicate what they have learned, in writing, in an art piece, and in a presentation.
- EALRs Addressed** EALR: 1. The student understands and applies the concepts and procedures of mathematics.  
Component: 1.3 Understand and apply concepts and procedures from geometric sense.
- EALR: 5. The student understands how mathematical ideas connect within mathematics, to other subject areas, and to real-world situations.  
Component: 5.1 Relate concepts and procedures within mathematics.
- Grades 6-10: 5.3.1 Understand that mathematics is used extensively in daily life outside the classroom. 5.3.2 Understand that mathematics is used in many occupations or careers.
- Possible Assessments** Students' projects will be assessed for their mathematical content and for their clarity. Students should be given assessment rubric when given the assignment.
- Learning Experiences** The format of this project will vary depending on students readiness for independent work. Students are given assignment outline with the expectations, as well as a list of topic suggestions, and possible resources. The level of structure and support given to students as they work on the project will depend on the classes need. Students may be given class time to work on projects or it may be completed outside of class.

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## **Integrating Visual Art into Elementary Classrooms**

Christina Brady

### **Introduction**

Growing up, I had many opportunities to express myself visually because art education was offered in the public schools I attended. I chose to make visual art my major in high school as well as college. Due to visual art education being provided in my public schooling, and choosing to continue that into college, I have a strong artistic background. However, this is not an opportunity that all students have today. Similarly, not all pre-service teachers are strong in the area of visual arts. With an emphasis placed on reading, writing, and math, visual art often gets placed at the bottom of the pile. Since not all teachers are confident in their visual arts background, many teachers may feel unprepared or unwilling to integrate visual art into their classrooms. They also may lack knowledge about educative benefits their students can gain from visual art integration.

While I have a strong background in visual art, I have not had an opportunity to teach art as an integrated subject. I chose to explore this topic to support the integration of visual art in my classroom and school, and collect resources/lesson plans that I could begin teaching with. I primarily chose visual art because I wanted to limit the scope of the research and it is my strongest area in the arts. All areas of the arts are important. In this paper, the word ‘art’ refers to visual art.

The resources I used for my research were journal articles, books, websites, teacher observations and interviews. I started by looking for specific benefits that are provided by art integration. At the same time, I found information about the challenges that integrating art into the classroom presents. I followed this with interviewing and observing two teachers, and interviewing a third teacher. Finally, I compiled specific resources that could guide teachers in integrating art. The purpose of this paper is to outline some of the benefits that art integration can have for students, the challenges in implementing art integration, what teachers can do to integrate art into the classroom, and to offer suggested resources as a place to start.

### **Benefits for Students**

Integrating art into the curriculum provides students exposure to skills and topics that they might have not learned. But when teachers and schools are pressed for time, this reason is not enough to change the curricula. Creating art engages multiple senses, which creates strong learning. Patricia Wolfe, in *Brain Matters*, tells us that “concrete experience is one of the best ways to make strong, long-lasting neural connections” (Wolfe, 2001, p. 188). Active learning engages multiple senses and creates more ways to recall information.

Integrating art into the classroom can tap into multiple intelligences, presenting an opportunity for students to learn in a way they prefer, and challenging other students to learn in a new way. Creating art engages students who enjoy art activities, or have spatial or bodily-kinesthetic intelligences. These intelligences, along with others, are detailed in Howard Gardner’s *Frames of Mind*. Students who have spatial intelligence can perceive the visual world accurately and re-create aspects of the visual experience. Students who have bodily-kinesthetic intelligence can work skillfully with objects (Gardner, 1985). Art also encourages divergent thinking, where many answers are possible (Fowler, 1994).

In addition to being active, and engaging students with different learning styles, art has many other benefits. Some of the skills gained through art are: imagination, creativity, problem-solving, critical thinking, decision making, collaboration, and the ability to manipulate symbols (Goldberg, 1997; Hamblen, 1997; Hereford & Schall, 1991; Heymsfeld, 1997; Lang, Feb. 2008). The US Department of Labor identified skills that are needed in the workplace, including creative thinking, decision making, problem solving, and collaboration (Hobbs & Rush, 1997). Art fosters these skills and many more.

Research reports that students gain: self-esteem, the ability to concentrate and focus, self-awareness, emotional release, discovery of their worth and identity, empathy, compassion, and flexibility through art activities (Hamblen, 1997; Heymsfeld, 1997; Michael, 1983). Two of the teachers I interviewed reported that art activities give students a different way to succeed, which may carry over into other subjects (Kooyman, Feb. 2008; Lang, Feb. 2008). Creating art is also a way for students to gain motor skills and hand-eye coordination, such as cutting and pasting, which is especially important for younger children (Lang, Feb. 2008; Smilansky, Hagan, & Lewis, 1988).

Creating and interpreting art can have specific benefits for both students who are English Language Learners (ELL) as well as students with learning disabilities (LD). Since art is a way for students to communicate non-verbally or without writing, ELL and LD students who have trouble communicating in writing have opportunities to learn and share ideas through art. For ELL students, this allows them to reach across language barriers and bolsters their self-esteem and self-confidence (Goldberg, 1997). ELL students who experience success in art can feel more comfortable and capable and therefore more willing to take risks with a second language (Eubanks, 2002). For students with LD who struggle with writing, success in art may break the cycle of failure (Goldberg, 1997). Experiences such as these can challenge the traditional notions of lower or higher functioning students, both for the teacher and other classmates (Goldberg, 1997).

Another important aspect of art is that it is linked to culture (Bawn, Feb. 2008; Kooyman, Feb. 2008). Integrating art from students' different cultures can foster cultural awareness (Goldberg, 1997). Art also becomes more meaningful when it is placed in a cultural context, and culture becomes more understandable through the arts (Efland, 2002). Placing art within its historical context can also help to deepen understanding about history and conversely, knowing the historical background of art can help to better understand it. Studying art and visiting museums can be rich experiences, but giving students the opportunity to create art can help them to see that art is not just a precious thing seen only in museums (Efland, 2002).

Integrating art can help to teach to the whole student by teaching the student creativity and critical thinking. When teachers create opportunities for collaboration and reach out to many learning styles, they boost self-esteem and allow ELL and LD students a chance to succeed. Art can provide an authentic way to bring student cultures into the classroom and link students to a rich history.

### **Challenges with Integrating Art**

Integrating art into the classroom can be challenging, especially for teachers who feel that they lack a background in art. However, the more challenging aspects of integrating art may be a result of the structures within education. Only 20 states have laws that mandate art education, instruction time is often reduced in art due to mandated tests, and the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law does little to financially support art in schools (Chapman, 2005a, 2005b). The

educational structures in place may signal that art is not considered of high value, or may only be valued to the extent that it helps students to learn other subjects, such as reading or math (Hamblen, 1997). This view of art is mirrored in schools by a lack of administrative support, lack of time devoted to art instruction, and a small budget for materials. Poor structural or administrative support can be difficult for teachers to work around in order to integrate art in their classrooms. Lack of support may lead people to question the reasons for including art in the curriculum.

In a 1999-2000 survey of full-time elementary classroom teachers, 92% said they taught art, but only 10% of those teachers reported having a degree with a major or minor in art (Chapman, 2005b). A common suggestion for integrating art is that classroom teachers collaborate with art specialists to design integrated units or lessons. However, the research I reviewed stated that classroom teachers had little to no common planning time with art specialists (Chapman, 2005a). The teachers I interview echoed this, stating that there was no common planning time available for classroom teachers and art specialists to collaborate (Bawn, Feb. 2008; Kooyman, Feb. 2008; Lang, Feb. 2008). Two of the teachers I interviewed are currently art specialists. They both stated that they did talk to classroom teachers and try to make their art lessons related to the students' class curriculum, but that there was no designated planning time to do so. Teachers may be challenged to find collaboration time in order to integrate art.

Since NCLB provides little financial support for art, art specialists may have small budgets, and classroom teachers may have to buy art supplies using their classroom budget. The teachers I interviewed had budgets ranging from \$0.35 to \$1.45 per student (these were art specialist budgets). Classroom teachers may not have a specified budget for art supplies, although I did not explore this. Asking the community for donations of art supplies could help teachers to provide more materials for art.

Along with small budgets, the space available for creating art may be less than ideal. One art specialist I interviewed was at a school with a very good art room, but it was being used by the preschool and the art class was in a portable building. Due to this, the teacher did not have a sink available to use, limiting the materials that she could teach with (Lang, Feb. 2008). In a general education classroom, similar space issues may arise.

Something to consider is that the ideas about what art integration looks like can vary from teacher to teacher (Lang, Feb. 2008). One view of art integration is a Valentine's Day project where students create valentines, or other projects that are holiday related. While these projects can be fun, they may further relegate art to a subject that is not highly valued or highly academic.

Another view of art integration is that it is a way of learning that is included on a regular basis within the curriculum. With this view, art is placed on a level field with other subjects and can enhance learning goals. This type of art integration can counter the bribe/reward model, where students who complete other work in a timely manner are rewarded with an art activity (Chapman, 2005a). Students should not have to earn the chance to participate in art activities. When teachers want to collaborate to integrate art in their classrooms, a good place to start is with each teacher's view of what they think art integration is and to build upon that.

### **How Classroom Teachers Can Integrate Art: General Suggestions**

Art should be integrated within the social and cultural context from which it comes (Efland, 2002). If you include art in your classroom from each culture represented, then you will

also be moving towards multicultural teaching. Discussion of artwork from different cultures can be a rich resource for bringing up social and cultural issues. Another way to bring up social and cultural issues is to provide a mirror in the classroom and encourage students to look at their skin, eye and hair colors, as well as those of their classmates (Hereford & Schall, 1991). However, be aware of the level of integration of the multicultural content, which can range from contribution (inserting discrete elements) to social action (students making decisions on social issues and taking action) (Banks & Banks, 2007).

Integrate and use art as a process, rather than a product (Hereford & Schall, 1991). If you use art as a process for learning, you will set students up for success. One way to focus on the process is to ask students open-ended questions. For example, instead of asking, "What is it?" you could say, "Tell me about what you are drawing." Try to avoid projects where students will all make the exact same product or occasions where you would tell the student exactly what to do, such as "Let's all paint a flower." Try to give the student as much choice within the activity as possible.

Make time and space for students to share and display artwork within the classroom and beyond (Frohardt, 1999; Hereford & Schall, 1991). This could include having a classroom art gallery, organizing an art exhibit, parent night or art fair, or sharing artwork through photos and news articles (Michael, 1983).

Discuss student artwork beyond statements such as 'it's ugly,' 'it's pretty,' 'I like it,' or 'I don't like it.' While there may be limited time for discussion about art, it is important to talk about what is there instead of just making judgments. One way to do this is to ask students what they see in order to gain multiple perspectives, and then to talk about what it might mean. Also allow the student artist talk about what they created.

Other general suggestions for how to integrate art include: starting with what you are comfortable with and integrating more over time, searching for online resources (some are included later in this paper) or looking at sample art curricula, gaining parent support or parent volunteers (especially those with art skills), or starting with the art project (Bawn, Feb. 2008; Kooyman, Feb. 2008; Lang, Feb. 2008).

### **How Classroom Teachers Can Integrate Art: Subject Specific Suggestions**

The following are specific concepts that can be integrated into certain subjects. Most of these suggestions were gleaned from research and from teacher interviews. This is by no means a complete list of concepts.

#### **Math:**

- geometric shapes using the paintings of Piet Mondrian and Paul Klee, patterns (Hamblen, 1997)
- ratios with tints and shades, measurement, perimeter (Lang, Feb. 2008)
- dimension (size, shape, quantity) using clay (Smilansky et al., 1988)
- tessellations (Kooyman, Feb. 2008)
- perpendicular and parallel lines and value with drawing (Bawn, Feb. 2008)

#### **Social Studies:**

- culture specific lessons: African art, Native American art, or South American/Mexican art; paper making in Japan; use art as a cultural complement within social studies (Kooyman, Feb. 2008)
- landforms using foreground, middle ground and background, as well as landscape features like mountains, trees, etc. (Bawn, Feb. 2008)

- Washington State compass rose project focusing on radial symmetry (Lang, Feb. 2008)

### **Writing:**

- journaling about art
- writing stories and illustrating them
- illustrating a literary work; drawing as a preliminary phase to writing (Hamblen, 1997)

### **Reading:**

- talking about illustrations in books (Kooyman, Feb. 2008)
- specific books focus on art concepts, such as *Mouse Paint*, which features primary and secondary colors; *Tar Beach*, which features perimeter and square inch; books by author Eric Carle, which feature collage, pattern, and texture (Lang, Feb. 2008)

### **Science:**

- using still life paintings of food to talk about nutrition (Hamblen, 1997)
- drawing plant life

### **Conclusion**

There are many things that students can gain from visual art integration, such as creativity, problem-solving skills, cultural awareness, motor skills and increased self-esteem. With NCLB providing little financial support for art, and mandated testing taking away instructional time, teachers may struggle to include art within their classrooms, especially if they have little background knowledge. However, it is possible for teachers to overcome the challenges associated with art integration and provide a rich environment for their students to learn in a new way. By using art as a process to learn about other subjects, and providing time and space for creating artwork, teachers can begin to integrate art into their classrooms. A list of resources is provided to give teachers a place to start.

### **Resources**

#### **Books**

*Art Projects by Design: A Guide for the Classroom*

Del Klaustermeier

Arranged according to art elements and grade level, some lessons integrated, some lessons multicultural, K-8

*Teaching Art with Books Kids Love: Teaching Art Appreciation, Elements of Art, and Principles of Design with Award-Winning Children's Books*

Darcie Clark Fohardt

Integrates reading and art, covers elements of art, principles of design and artistic styles

#### **Sampling of Books about Specific Artists**

*Diego* by Jeanette Winter

Available in Spanish/English version, about the life and art of Deigo Rivera

*Linnea in Monet's Garden* by Christina Bjork and Lena Anderson

An introduction to the impressionist painter Claude Monet and his artwork and techniques

*From Pigasso to Mootisse* by Nina Laden

Introduces Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse and their painting styles

*Mouse Paint* by Ellen Stoll Walsh  
Introduces mixing primary colors to get secondary colors

*Tar Beach* by Faith Ringgold  
Introduces paintings of quilts within the context of African American storytelling

### **Websites**

Caldecott Medal and Honor Books, 1938-Present

The Caldecott Medal is awarded each year for the most distinguished American picture book.

<http://www.ala.org/ala/alsc/awardsscholarships/literaryawds/caldecottmedal/caldecotthonors/caldecottmedal.cfm>

Seattle Art Museum: School and Educator Programs

<http://www.seattleartmuseum.org/Learn/schoolteacher/default.asp>

Tacoma Art Museum: Teacher Resources

It is stated that the Museum's Teacher Resources are aligned with the EALRs.

<http://www.tacomaartmuseum.org/page.asp?view=7827&subnav=1>

Princeton Online: Incredible Art Department, Elementary Lessons

Many lesson ideas, some integrated; lessons for middle and high school are also available from the main page

<http://www.princetonol.com/groups/iad/lessons/elem/elemlessons.html>

K- 6 Elementary Art Lessons

Many lesson ideas, broken down by grade level and theme (one theme is multicultural), some integrated

<http://www.geocities.com/theartkids/artlessons.html>

Crayola® Lesson Plans

Search by grade level (includes special needs), subject, theme

<http://www.crayola.com/lesson-plans/>

The Kennedy Center ArtsEdge: Lessons

Includes visual art, dance, music and theater, search by grade band or art subject

<http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/teach/les.cfm>

Eric Carle Website

Information about the author Eric Carle, who wrote *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*

<http://www.eric-carle.com/home.html>

Public Broadcasting Service Teachers

Includes lesson plans, videos, offline activities and projects; some lessons are interdisciplinary; search by grade band and art subject

<http://www.pbs.org/teachers/arts/>

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## **Social Activism Within a Multicultural Framework**

Robert Cahill

The world's greatest problems do not result from people being unable to read and write. They result from people in the world – from different cultures, races, religions, and nations – being unable to get along and to work together to solve the world's problems, such as global warming, the HIV/AIDS epidemic, poverty, racism, sexism, terrorism, international conflict, and war  
– James Banks (Banks et. al, 2007, p. 5).

### **Four Levels of Bank's Multicultural Education Framework**

James Banks defines four levels of multicultural content integration. The contributions approach is the first level and does least to integrate multicultural content. The teacher at this stage focuses on “heroes, holidays, and discrete cultural elements” (Banks, 2007, p. 251).” Students may study Martin Luther King Jr. in mid-January, or read an African American author during the month of February, but for the remainder of the year, students will be subjected to a dominantly Eurocentric curriculum that “remains unchanged in its basic structure, goals, and salient characteristics” (Banks, 2007, p. 251). Although heroes are depicted, the systems of oppression – institutionalized and systematic – and the struggles that the individuals fought against are overlooked or trivialized.

The additive approach is the second level of multicultural education and tends to be the norm for most public school systems today. Curricular materials in the additive approach reinforce the status quo, mainly a Eurocentric dominated pedagogy, but the curriculum is supplemented to include marginalized perspectives of people with diverse backgrounds and cultures.

The transformative approach fundamentally differs from the first two levels of content integration, because content is not merely added to mainstream core curriculum; instead, the transformative approach revamps the entire structure of the curriculum “to enable students to view concepts, issues, events, and themes from the perspectives of diverse ethnic and cultural groups” (Banks, 2007, p. 251).

Social activism, the fourth realm of multicultural education, has deep roots in the transformative approach. Educators first establish a transformative multicultural approach to classroom practices and content integration that increase equity and critical pedagogy, then devote class time for students to address issues in their lives they seek to change. In this sense, creating a transformative multicultural classroom is itself a form of activism, on the part of the teacher, in terms of raising awareness and critical consciousness that grounds student activism. However, the aim of social activism as defined in this paper is to engage students towards fulfilling their potential as agents to impact their lives, communities, and conditions that affect them.

### **Personal Rationale**

I recently student taught in an elementary school in Tacoma, Washington, where the curriculum and learning materials at best reached the second level of Banks' model of multicultural education. For weeks, I wondered what a genuine integration of multicultural

content would look like. What would the learning environment be like in a transformative classroom? How would the teacher interact and work with students? What assignments would be offered? What would be the reaction of the administrators or parents? I had read about multicultural education from theoretical texts, but wanted to see and experience this teaching approach firsthand in public schools. Studying this content matter would leave a lasting impression on my philosophy of education, and help prepare me to become a teacher with the knowledge, background, and resources to integrate a transformative curriculum into a traditional public school classroom. This paper became a way of allowing myself to observe teachers and read from a variety of sources about what is possible, and to become inspired by actions that students have taken in the classroom towards social justice. This independent contract also allows me to develop lesson plans that are applicable, practical, and substantive, which can be adapted or modified in the future.

### **Theoretical Justification for Social Activism within a Multicultural Education Framework**

At a time when cynicism and hopelessness increasingly dominate our youth, helping students understand the world and their relationship to it by encouraging social action may be one of the few anecdotes – Bob Peterson (Bigelow et al, 1994, p. 39).

In the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire states that education cannot be neutral. Either education reinforces conformity to the status quo, “or it becomes ‘the practice of freedom,’ the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of the world” (Freire, 1972, p. 34). Even the teacher attempting to remain politically neutral makes countless political decisions through the course teaching – “from posters on the walls to attitudes towards holidays” (Bigelow et al., 1994, p. 40).

Avoiding the transformative approach to multicultural education reinforces the status quo, by socializing “students to accept the uneven power relations of our society along the lines of race, class, gender, and ability” (Bigelow et al., 2001, p. 19). In the United States, the status quo in public schools works to assimilate students into accepting mainstream views of individualism, meritocracy, and the belief in an open system of upward mobility. The status quo also typically ignores issues of racism, classism, sexism, homophobia, and social inequality.

This paper assumes that educators intend to dedicate themselves to anti-biased curriculum content and classroom practices, with an unwavering commitment to social justice values. Social action through a multicultural approach strives towards: engaging and motivating students who have been historically marginalized and alienated in the classroom; closing the achievement gap; validating the backgrounds and cultures of all students; and empowering school culture so that students can reform the structure of the school for equity purposes (Banks, 2007; Vavrus, 2001). As educators, our job is to facilitate opportunities that address racism, sexism, homophobia, classism, or other forms of oppression whenever they occur.

### **Components of a Social Activist Curriculum**

Curriculum based on students’ priority concerns can have a lasting effect on the students involved, and can also shape our world” (Schultz & Oyler, 2006, p. 17).

Educators publishing for *Rethinking Schools* advocate broad-ranging components to social justice teaching – curriculum and classroom practices that are “grounded in the lives of our

students, critical, multicultural, anti-racist, pro-justice, participatory, experiential, hopeful, joyful, kind, visionary, activist, academically rigorous, and culturally sensitive” (Bigelow et al., 1994, pp. 4-5). Integrating students’ lives and their communities into all sections of the curriculum may not seem necessarily transformative, but once students have an opportunity to share their lives, the critical elements come from trying to alter, and address conditions that affect them (Bigelow et al., 1994).

Linda Christensen employs an empathy-based curriculum to foster community in her classroom: “To become a community, students must learn to live in someone else’s skin, understand the parallels of hurt, struggle, and joy across class and culture lines, and work for change” (Bigelow et al, 1994, p. 50). Early in the school year, her students are assigned to write “I Am From” poems about their cultures and backgrounds (Bigelow et al., 1994, p. 34). The poems are a way of embracing, validating, and affirming student differences, and helping students recognize the strengths and significance of their cultures, families, and communities (Bigelow et al., 1994).

Bob Hughes, a math teacher at Jefferson Middle School in Olympia, WA emphasizes the importance of forming an authentic relationship with all students: “Find ways to have heart to heart connections. Spend time in the lunchroom and hallways. Be a part of their world” (Hughes, 2008). During every math course, Bob Hughes uses small cooperative learning groups: “Students get to talk, they get to have a voice, instead of listening to me talk for fifty-five minutes.” (Hughes, 2008). He consistently reiterates to students the power of education to empower their lives: “I want students to have an education so that they can deal with treating each other better, and they can deal better with facing struggles in their lives” (Hughes, 2008).

Along with constructivist, collaborative and heterogeneous groupings, dialogues, roleplays, simulations, mock-trials, and experiments are useful to increase student engagement and to promote positive inter-personal relationships among students with diverse backgrounds (Bigelow, et al., 1994, 2001). Critical pedagogy – studying issues of power, privilege, and oppression – as well as critiquing the biases of learning and curricular materials are both major component to transformative education (Banks, 2007; Vavrus, 2001). From a Deweyian perspective, an experiential and problem-based educational approach allows educators to circumvent textbooks and prescribed, scripted curriculum towards addressing real-life problems. To combat the notion of schools being artificial institutions, discussing “current problems and possible solutions” is another feature of transformative education leading to social activism (Bigelow, et al, 1994, p. 37).

According to Lisa Delpit (1995) students “must be taught the codes needed to participate fully in the mainstream of American life, not by being forced to attend to hollow inane, decontextualized subskills, but rather within the contest of meaningful endeavors” (p. 45). Contextualizing meaningful endeavors within a multicultural framework stands as a positive and idealistic approach to education. Educators find ways for student work to have real-life impacts, where the learning outcomes are manifested through public or published work, or when the learning goals target needs of the students, school, and community. Social activism is also an alternative to cynicism and despair. Rather than heaping the miseries of the world onto students, maintaining a level of joy and visionary pedagogy requires educators offering a perspective of those who struggled, victories made, and ways that students can put their hearts and energies towards affecting change.

## **Project Citizenship – Case Study**

Project Citizen began when a classroom of fifth-graders decided to take on the School Board of Chicago to make good on its promise to build a new school. The students, who predominately lived in the Cabrini Green housing projects, attended an elementary school that was literally falling apart. The school's structure was dilapidated, the heating system, drinking fountains, and plumbing were inoperable; the lunchroom had been virtually condemned, and windows were pocked with bullet holes (Schultz & Oyler, 2006). Instead of using prescribed curriculum, Brian Schultz used student interests and concerns to design curriculum to practice direct democratic action. For seven months, the Project Citizen curriculum integrated problem posing, problem-solving, and decision making around a community-based social action project.

The first responsibility the teacher recognized was to provide a space for students to ask important questions and to pursue knowledge that is meaningful. Brian Shultz began by aligning Project Citizen's curriculum to Illinois State standards; skills in civic engagement and participatory democracy, connected to Illinois standards based on:

Reaching group decisions that include minority and dissenting opinions; making action plans that take into account laws, social norms, and public relations; preparing materials to articulate the issue to fellow students and the general public; petitioning the appropriate governmental agencies; speaking with the media; making public testimony; and negotiating conflicts that emerge at each of the preceding levels” (Schultz & Oyler, 2006, p. 3).

The initial lessons culminated in a student-led discussion and brainstorm of what problems affect students and what they would like to see changed. Not having engaged this type of community project before, Brian Shultz was afraid of yielding too much control to students and having the classroom spin off into chaos. Initially, students spent time on assignments geared towards their understanding of local government. Journaling assignments and self-assessing writing prompts were used to give feedback to the teacher, and were helpful for the teacher to understand the students, their interests, and dedications. Although the teacher exerted “pedagogical authority,” the students simultaneously felt “direct ownership of the content and the processes as well” (Schultz & Oyler, 2006, p. 8).

The students invited community members into the classroom for panel discussion and student-led interviews; prior to this experience, students spent time studying what made effective questions. When students interviewed Revered Tinter, a community member, the topic of racism came up in terms of gentrification and inequalities existing in the school system. The teacher, who was White, recognized that the predominately Black students in the classroom were far more expert on issues of racism; he sent a message that “student content authority had a legitimate role in the classroom” by validating students' needs to talk about and explore issues of racism (Schultz & Oyler, 2006, p. 9).

This allocation of authority promoted trust and respect on behalf of students, as evidenced in student writings (Schultz & Oyler, 2006); however, it is worth pointing out that sharing authority did not mean giving it up. The project gained momentum when students established specific, accomplishable plans of actions and began working in groups to conduct interviews, conduct surveys, write letters, and create a video documentary. Video documentation was not a strong suit of the educator, but he arranged for student initiative to shape and change the possibilities for action by collaborating with capable educators with a background in video production and editing (Schultz & Oyler, 2006). From the project, students actively participated

in the research and creation of the curriculum. Directly resulting from the civic project, soap was filled in the soap dispensers in the bathrooms; windows were replaced, allowing the sunlight to enter the classrooms; water fountains returned to working order. The students' efforts created national headlines and garnered the praise and support of advocates for social justice and democratic action, even though the Chicago Board of Education eventually closed the school.

### **Sustainability – Case Study**

When children write for real audiences, read books and articles about issues that really matter, and discuss big ideas with compassion and intensity, 'academics' starts to breathe" (Rethinking Schools, 1994, p. 5).

Wendy Hughes teaches fifth grade at Garfield Elementary in Olympia, Washington. Her classroom has embarked on an innovative way of using social activism to engage students. Students are responsible for writing, editing, and illustrating a monthly newspaper on sustainability. The newspaper has a science focus and emphasizes what young people can do to enact social change.

The day that I spent with her classroom, students had a deadline to meet; they were busily editing their work and formatting and printing articles and artwork. The articles had been researched, edited, revised, and reworked for weeks. Structured into the curriculum itself, a forty-five minute block is dedicated to writing strategies, where students write and workshop their writing – reading passages aloud to classmates while silently accepting constructive feedback. The writing is then reworked to turn into the student's portfolio or submitted as articles for next month's newspaper. Topics for this month's newspaper included a detailed list of where people can buy locally grown food, tips for composting, and reasons why people should care about salmon restoration in the Puget Sound. Last month, the newspaper explored global warming, rechargeable versus disposable batteries, the aftermath of a recent oil spill; an article featured the history of plastic and spotlighted a local coffee shop that recently stopped using plastics throughout the store. Every student plays a role in the publication of the newspaper – students reluctant to publish their writing are assigned tasks creating cartoons, artwork, illustrations, word searches and crossword puzzles.

### **Examples for Social Action based on Transformative Multicultural Education**

- "Real-World Recycling" by Mary Cowhey (2006): Students read a variety of books on the environment and pollution; organize actions they could take at home and at school to recycle; write letters to the assistant superintendent; chart data and surveys on the amount of waste materials generated during the lunchroom; research the cost of food services in the district; advocate for broader and more substantial recycling measures through appealing to the school board and news media.
- "Critiquing Fairy Tales and Films" by Linda Christensen (Bigelow, et al., 1994): Students critique stereotypes using dialogue journals. The teacher poses a quote from the reading and assigns students to write whether they agree or disagree with it. Then students share their ideas through peer interactions and whole group discussions. To engage social action, students write a report card for the various TV cartoons and children's books, including the stereotypes they perpetuate; they distribute these to parents at PTA night, along with strategies for guiding children for watching TV. Students also write and illustrate children's

stories – reading them to other students, explaining why they chose not to perpetuate stereotypes or misinformation that they had observed in other stories and films.

- “Notable Women” by National Women’s History Project (2008). Students begin by reviewing the notable women mentioned on the honor roll of Scholastic Books website. The educator helps facilitate ways students can research and explore women from diverse cultures and backgrounds who have been excluded from the list. Each student chooses a woman, writes an essay about that person, and sends this information to Scholastic editors to enrich their resources to include more women. The same letter-writing campaign could be duplicated for other textbooks companies. To fill out this lesson, students role play their person, construct dioramas, publish work to exchange with students, and lobby for their school to honor National Women’s History Month.
- The most empowering lessons or social actions have not yet been enacted – they wait in the minds and imaginations of students who will become agents of change, dedicated towards improving the world. Poetry, role playing, interior monologues, and critiquing textbooks are recommended ways of emotionally reaching students and inspiring them to affect change through social action. Once students are passionate about a topic, the next step is to help them develop a plan of action that is meaningful to them, localized, and relevant to learning goals.

### **Criticisms, Pitfalls & Perplexities of Transformative Multicultural Pedagogy**

“Conflict is the midwife of consciousness” –Paulo Friere

Social activism within a multicultural framework demands teachers to seek awareness on oppression issues and “cultural competency”; examine their “cultural encapsulation”; and to design lesson plans that make visible the links between learning goals aligned to state standards and the cultural interests of students and community (Vavrus, 2001). Striving towards a transformative multicultural pedagogy requires extensive work, effort, time, planning, collaboration and resources. When critical social issues are brought into the forefront of curriculum, facilitating dialogue can be tremendously challenging. Many things can go wrong. Oppressive attitudes, prejudices of the worst kinds, students becoming hurt and seething with resentment can implode on a classroom discussion. Major prerequisites must be in place for healthy and productive dialogue to flourish – namely, a strong sense of inclusiveness, safety, and belonging must permeate throughout the classroom environment. Students need to feel respected, validated, and welcome.

Educators may also feel unprepared with this educational approach. How much expertise should a teacher share, rather than allowing students to practice democratic decision-making? How much does a teacher push on a project and how much should the project be authentically student-led? If a teacher realizes a short-lived idea will not be productive, when should a teacher intervene? Unfortunately, there are not a lot of satisfactory answers. These perplexing questions require extensive reflection and judgement by educators. This kind of teaching can lead educators into uncharted waters, where the outcome of the project and inquiry might not be known; adding to the vulnerability of the teacher, teachers might be challenged by other teachers, school administrators, or community members. Students are rhetorically encouraged to participate in schools to fulfill their civic responsibilities, but too often teachers fail to approach activism from fear of imposing their own values, and politics onto students. The result is that civic action

projects fall by the wayside or are swept under the rug of prescribed, scripted, and skills-based curriculum, which does little to empower students towards becoming agents of change.

### **Conclusion**

All students need to be engaged in critical analysis of social issues, where class time is devoted for students to organize on behalf of social action. By their design, structure, and the inequalities inherent in the status quo, schools are oppressive institutions. Unless teachers challenge this, schools will continue to oppress people instead of liberating them, and teachers will fail to help students realize the potential of education to improve and empower their lives. It takes extraordinary and dedicated teachers to challenge mainstream core curriculum, to see what the parameters are, and to push for lesson plans and curriculum that will afflict and disrupt the status quo.

Educators have the responsibility to grapple with issues of social equality in the classroom, without fear of backlash or controversy – as long as the teaching is in-line with the federal mandates, district goals, and the particular policy of the school. Many district goals give lip-service to the rhetoric of lofty ideals such as democracy, diversity, equality and addressing the achievement gap. Educators must ensure that these ideals are being lived up to in concrete, identifiable, and practical ways. Educators will be best served by organizing and forming solidarity with organizations committed to social justice work – as well as forming true solidarity with other teachers, community members, parents, and of course, students.

### **Resources for Educators**

<http://www.civiced.org/> Center for Civic Education  
<http://www.edchange.org/> Ed Change  
<http://www.projectcitizen405.com> Project Citizen  
<http://www.rethinkingschools.org> Rethinking Schools  
<http://www.teachingforchange.org> Teaching for Change  
<http://www.teachingtolerance.org> Teaching Tolerance

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## Understanding Content: ELL Methods for the Multilingual Classroom

Jennifer Clement

Increased diversity in the classroom is often mentioned within the context of discussing challenges faced by teachers. As Freeman and Freeman (2000) characterize it, “Our schools reflect an increasingly rich linguistic diversity, and this brings with it a challenge for teachers because more students at all grade levels have limited English proficiency” (pg. 7). The authors go on to describe how the population of limited English proficient (LEP) students increased over 100% from 1989 to 2000. According to the U.S. Department of Education, during the 2004-05 school year, over 5 million students, or 10.5% of the total student population, were classified as limited English proficient (US Department of Education, 2006). The data tells us that there are many students in public schools who are learning English at the same time that they are learning content. To understand what this data means for the classroom teacher we must know that while they share the same burden of limited English proficiency and are categorized under the same label, these students are by no means a monolithic group.

Limited English proficient students understand English to varying degrees, have widely divergent histories, and speak a large variety of languages. A survey done by the Department of Education during the 2000-01 school year noted 40 different language groups spoken by at least 5,000 limited English proficient students. The same survey noted that Washington State had 35,298 limited English proficient students in the 2000-01 school year. Of those students, 60.9% spoke Spanish, 7.5% spoke Russian, 6.4% spoke Vietnamese, 4.7% Ukrainian and 2.5% spoke Korean (US Department of Education, 2002). The first languages of the remaining 18% of LEP students in the state were not listed. The Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) noted 25 districts in the state serving students who speak more than 20 languages (2003). Many states experience similar linguistic diversity in their classrooms. The Department of Education (2002) report cited above asked each state to list the top five languages spoken by LEP students in their schools, and all states were able to list a different language group for each category, indicating that they served students who spoke at least this many languages. Many of the sources cited herein make it clear that limited English proficiency students exist in significant numbers within public schools, and these students speak a variety of languages. Yet these students, along with all others, are expected to be able to access education as outlined in the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, which mandates that all students are able to test proficient on statewide standardized tests by 2014. The challenge for teachers, then, is to teach the content they are mandated to teach to all their students, including those who have limited English proficiency. This student subpopulation often experiences a achievement gap and a high dropout rate. To address these problems, the Government Accountability office (2006) has recommended that schools take the following actions, which were all seen in districts that had made improvements in academic proficiency of their LEP students:

*“strong professional development focused on effective teaching strategies for students with limited English proficiency; school or district leadership that focuses on the needs of these students, such as providing sufficient resources to meet those needs and establishing high academic standards for these students; “data driven” decisions, such as using data strategically to identify students who are doing well and those who need more help, to identify effective instructional approaches, or to provide effective*

*professional development; and efforts to work with parents to support the academic progress of their children” (pg. 23).*

In response to the recommendations made above, this report identifies instructional approaches and professional development possibilities in an effort to increase content understanding for LEP students in multilingual middle and secondary classrooms. In order to study the complex area of language acquisition, a constructivist research methodology was implemented. Academic writings about curricular strategies for English Language Learner (ELL) students in multilingual classrooms were enhanced with observations of two very different multilingual settings. This cognitive work, in turn, was melded with affective and objective observations made by the researcher as she progressed through her own course of language acquisition.

Language acquisition is a complex process that requires both the memorization of specific information and the ability to take on broader contexts such as word order, pacing and cultural norms. As such, it affects both our cognitive and affective domains and changes our cultural knowledge. It is a process which can be observed from the outside but perhaps best understood through direct participation. Various methods of language acquisition were tried, and the effectiveness of each was noted. Language acquisition was both actively pursued through various learning methods and consistently reflected upon. A narrative of that process is available in Appendix 1.

While the language acquisition process was being explored directly, academic sources delimitating classroom based approaches to instruction in multilingual classrooms were concurrently referenced. All sources used mentioned one characteristic of educators who successfully taught in multilingual classrooms: culturally responsive teaching. Teachers wrote about integrating student cultures into classroom activities and environments. Professors wrote about teaching through themes connected to student’s lives. Community organizations wrote about teaching the essential skills desired by the learner. All of these methods involved welcoming and accentuating student cultures and daily lives in the classroom.

Teaching Reading in Multilingual Classrooms (2000) a fairly brief manual on teaching reading the sociopsycholinguistic way blended with ELL strategies. Information on graphophonics and cueing systems is included along with classroom strategies intended to support ELL learners such as thematic interdisciplinary units and targeted text selections. The book, by teaching team Freeman & Freeman from Fresno Pacific University, comes across as a strong advocate for increasing access to books through the creation of a large classroom library, building interdisciplinary curriculum around themes (such as “the ocean”), implementing a rich literacy environment around a predictable schedule, teaching skills in strategic mini lessons, and collaborative learning. All the texts used in the units discussed are listed at the end of the descriptions. The book is written in an approachable brief style and certainly isn’t meant to be a comprehensive guide. For a chart of all the major strategies proposed in the book see Appendix 2.

Freeman and Freeman offer a broad text for supporting reading in the multilingual classroom. Medina and Campano (2006) contribute to the discussion in their article “Performing Identities Through Drama and Teatro Practices in Multilingual Classrooms”. The primary subject of the article is an exploration of alternative literacy practices, most notably the use of drama and teatro practices in expanding student literacy. Useful information provided includes the use and history of teatro, a theatre of the oppressed developed in migrant labor camps. It is defined by the authors as “El Teatro Campesino, a form of Chicana/o political theatre that arose from the

migrant labor camps of the 1960s and 1970s.” (pg. 337-8). It includes a discussion of the intent of literacy instruction that includes an analysis of “literacy for domestication” juxtaposed with an endorsement of literacy for empowerment practices such as teatro and drama which enable students to talk back to dominant structures and/or mobilize their own cultural/social identities (pg. 333). The article also included curriculum ideas related to using the above mentioned alternative literacy activities as apart of a larger literacy program, including oral and written writing-in-role activities (pg. 334). Samples of bilingual student work (pg. 334-336) were included, as were suggestions for easing ELL student transitions into new environments as penned by students themselves during a Teatro activity described in the article (pg. 337-341).

“Seeing the Possibilities: Learning From, With, and About Multilingual Classroom Communities” (Van Sluys & Labbo, 2006) is another article that emphasizes the development of a rich literary environment. Like Medina and Campano’s article, Van Sluys & Labbo also recommend using the arts as an entry point to language and content. The article, like the other sources discussed, encourages using student’s cultures and what is described as their *funds of knowledge* (Van Sluys & Labbo, pg. 326). Van Sluys & Labbo recommend extensive group and pair work in literacy activities. Their approach is to teach English, language arts and social studies through reading, writing, speaking and kinesthetic tasks. Highlights of the approach include student made dual language texts on language arts and social studies topics, the creation of non-written texts (such as maps and sketched reflections on class readings), and corporative student editing. Further summary on the articles findings is available in Appendix 2.

Other texts reviewed included the “Tutoring ESL: A Handbook for Volunteers,” which is published by the Tacoma Community House (State Office of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance, 2001). This manual, though created for tutors, is full of helpful information and activity ideas. The Total Physical Response (TPR) method is described, as is lesson planning and the Language Experience Approach for Reading (LEA), a technique that uses “texts” spoken by the student and transcribed as said by the teacher/tutor. These texts are manipulated in a variety of ways to increase literacy skills as professional texts traditionally are.

In “Teaching Content with the Help of Writing Across the Curriculum” Peterson (2007) recommends an approach similar to what Tamar Krames promotes in her interview below. Through explicit writing instruction and the use of curricular supports such as the Cornell Framework for note taking and the use of detailed rubrics, Peterson advocates the teaching of content paired with instruction in writing to increase comprehensible input for a variety of students. “Teaching Mathematics and English to English Language Learners Simultaneously” Slavit and Ernst-Slavit (2007) discuss the unique nature of teaching ELL learners content that contains specialized language and symbols. They primarily recommend corporative learning, multiple rich vocabulary development opportunities, and, of course, the integration of student experiences and cultures.

Gorgorió and Núria (2005) remind us of the complexities embedded within multilingual classrooms in their article about the mediation that occurs between content centered in one culture and a learner from another. The article investigates how mathematics is influenced by social representations and how these norms clash with the social cultural context of immigrant students. Gorgorió and Núria recommend dialogue between the teacher and other students from socially dominant groups and immigrant students so the world view and mathematical understanding of both can be understood. The authors suggest that student non participation may be an “active contest with norms and negative opinions in order to safeguard their social and cultural identities within a context that they perceive as hostile” (Gorgorió and Núria, pg. 101).

The only solution, then, is to remove student perception of environmental hostility by practicing inclusion and culturally responsive teaching. In “Effective Teaching Strategies for Middle School Learners in Multicultural, Multilingual Classrooms” (2007) Allison and Rehm survey teachers on the effectiveness of a variety of teaching strategies for ELL learners. Their findings indicate that the most effective methods (in order of effectiveness) were the use of visuals, peer tutoring, corporative learning, and the use of alternate forms of assessment. The rest of the article is devoted to describing these methods.

With a research base established, a small observation sequence was implemented. Two very different multilingual classrooms were observed. The first was an ESL classroom in Lakewood, Washington. Lakewood is a diverse area in the silhouette of a large military base. Tamar Krames, who teaches in the classroom observed, is certified to teach ESL and Elementary Art. In all, two classes were observed and a teacher interview was conducted. The first class was composed of students determined through testing to be at a beginning language acquisition level. The second class was composed of students determined to be at an intermediate level. During the observations the following ELL methods were observed: visual support for auditory directions (form projected through document camera), TPR in all activities, English-Spanish and English-Russian dictionaries available, Pair work on English language acquisition, resource creation and use (students used verb books they had created). In addition, several resources for ELL learners were gleaned through the teacher interview and observation of the classroom environment. Tamar exhibited a wealth of instructional materials, including novels called lexicon books printed by the InZone books division of Hampton Brown publishing. These books have explanations of difficult words and colloquiums embedded at the bottom of unaltered text. They are created from popular books. Krames is currently teaching her advanced class using a lexicon book of Myer’s book *Monster*. A small library was also observed. The library contained children’s books, short novels, graphic novels and content series such as the National Geographic’s reading expeditions series and the Thomson-Henile Gateway to Science series. When asked, Krames thought the best tactics content teachers could use to increase understanding for their ELL students was to provide multiple entry points for the information (visual, auditory, symbolic, etc) and to explicitly teach reading comprehension strategies in all courses (K Tamar, personal communication, February 21, 2008).

The second observation was done in Shelton, Washington at the Mason county juvenile detention center. Instruction at the institution is done through a local high school. Krag Unsoeld, who teaches at the site, is endorsed in secondary social studies and language arts. The entire day of instruction for all students at the site was observed and a teacher interview was conducted. During the observation the following ELL methods were observed: auditory support for texts (CD of novel playing as students follow along), Word Processor support (computers available for writing activities), Whole class read (article distributed, volunteers read) and comprehension discussion, one-on-one support (throughout instruction), discussion & review of assignment (questions on article read aloud), student guided learning (flexibility in curriculum for specific credit allocation), visual support for lecture (PowerPoint slides w/pictures accompanying STI talk by visitor from Health Department). The teacher interview indicated that many of the methods used were intended to assist both ELL learners and those with Learning Disabilities or other academic challenges such as low literacy levels (K Unsoeld, personal communication, January 31, 2008). The unique nature of instruction at the detention center allows for students to pursue individualized learning much of the time. As a result, direct planning for ELL learners is

done on an as needed basis, with much of the daily operations of the classroom supporting these learners and others who face challenges in the traditional classroom.

In the course of this research, all of the sources used, including the researcher's personal language acquisition process, indicated that ELL students, particularly those who are LEP, benefit from what can be characterized as culturally responsive teaching. Incorporating student's cultures and experiences into the classroom was a much echoed theme. Tan's article, "The Need for Multiculturalism in the Classroom as Perceived by Mexican American Schoolchildren," (2002) also resonates with that theme. The article is a review of interview responses given by over a thousand 8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade students. Results indicated that Mexican American students perceived that their classes were far less responsive to their cultures than white students did. Mexican American students also reported enjoying the incorporation of their culture in the classroom and wishing that such incorporation was done more. "Affirming Identities in Multilingual Classrooms" (Cummins, Bismilla, Chow, Cohen, Giampapa, Leoni, Sandhu, and Sastri, 2005) agrees with the students, focusing on the inclusion of student's other languages into the classroom. Like Van Sluys and Reiner, the eight authors who collaborated on this article also recommend the use of dual language texts created by students. The authors feel that "English language learners will engage academically to the extent that instruction affirms their identities and enables them to invest their identities in learning" (pg. 40) and recommend that instruction explicitly uses the students first language as a resource.

If one follows the thinking of Cummins et al, the presence of multiple languages in the classroom is not a challenge but a resource. As the Government Accountability Office notes, handling linguistic diversity in the classroom involves many techniques that are also beneficial to other learners in the room. In addition, the multilingual classroom provides a true to life experience that has strong potential for complexity and richness.

Fundamental to success is an approach that can be characterized as culturally responsive teaching, which is a disposition and guiding technique that teachers implement curriculum inside of. Within the circle of culturally responsive teaching are the methods and strategies used to engage students in responsive content in a culturally congruent way. These are varied and happen at multiple complexity levels within the Bloom taxonomy. They assist the student in making meaning out of English and content (comprehensible input) and to create products that are meaningful for the learner and their learning community (comprehensible output). The result of this mix is increased understanding of both the subject matter and the English language. The student gains access to power without being forced to lose their identity, the teacher performs their job as prescribed, the school and district benefits from increased academic performance of ELL students, the community benefits from students who can make positive contributions, and society at large experiences decreased tax expenditures and a higher standard of living.

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## **Appendices**

Appendix 1: Language Acquisition Narrative

Appendix 2: Teaching Reading in Multilingual Classrooms, Language Acquisition Methods

### **Appendix 1: Language Acquisition Narrative**

#### Spanish for Dummies

The Spanish for Dummies CD's are really boring. Lessons include: "Saying Hello and Goodbye," "Simple Past Tense." And "Asking for and Getting Help." Each lesson format is the same. The lesson theme is introduced, the word or phrase is said in English, then in Spanish. There is a short pause where the listener is supposed to repeat the word or phrase in Spanish. Then the narrator says the target vocabulary again, and there is another pause where the listener repeats. This sequence continues for each word or saying under the lesson theme. I mixed the Spanish for Dummies tracks with general English music tracks on my mp3 player so I can listen to it while I'm driving, which helps make the monotone repetitive Spanish instruction a little more bearable. It seems like a relatively efficient language acquisition tool and I like the emphasis on pronunciation, though the narrators Spanish sounds different from the Spanish I hear in real life. The main problem with this method is that it is boring and not very contextualized. Pre formed phrases are offered, but it is more of a program for travelers than those wishing to be fluent. Based on my observations of my own learning and motivation to learn when using the Spanish for Dummies program I think that this method may be a good emergency tool for those with very little to no knowledge of the target language who have an immediate need for survival language (such as immigrants). Student interest in language learning may help offset the dull nature of the program in some situations, but a reluctant student is not likely to be engaged with this approach. The series teaches language separately from content, making it difficult to integrate into the general secondary classroom. It may be a good zone of proximal development refresher at key transition points in language acquisition. The segregated nature of the program allows students to select a small slide of the language they want to focus on such as "Degrees of Adjectives." An accompanying booklet lists all the words and phrases in English and Spanish by section, but most of the learning appears to be centered on oral language acquisition over reading and there is no writing acquisition component. Cultural component is one of the outsiders gaining entry, with themes on "Making a Reservation" "At the Restaurant" and "At the Bank." Little information about the culture associated with the language is provided.

#### Rosetta Stone Computer Program

The Rosetta Stone program is more engaging than Spanish for Dummies. It combines pictures with auditory language prompts. There are also programs which prompt you to type what is said or repeat orally what is said. The program is segregated into units and levels. It introduces vocabulary one segment at a time building on words & phrases learned in previous levels. It records your score for each section and has unit tests. On the system at the college's language lab there appears to be no way of recording individual progress, but perhaps results pages could at least be printed if the computer used was

hooked up to a printer. I found myself writing the new vocabulary terms on a sheet of paper when I was matching pictures to auditory information. Supplemental textbooks may also be helpful especially when working on writing component (as accents and misspellings are counted as miscues but may be difficult to pick out from auditory track). While more engaging than Spanish for Dummies with learning targeted for a wider array of skills (such as writing), this program also seems like it would work best as a side component to a wider acquisition program. There is no student control over vocabulary introduced and learning is broken into components, making it unlikely that fluency could be achieved with the program alone. The program would also be helpful for survival learners and to scaffold comprehension transitions. Use of the program may help students learn basic computer skills if needed. Program also has a cultural component, exposing students to scenes reminiscent of middle class Latin America through images of new cars, stylish modern women and Americanized foods. Topics are more wide ranging than in the Spanish for Dummies program, with vocabulary targeted from a wider range of topics.

#### Immersion: English Class through Mason County Literacy

My work with Mason County Literacy extends beyond this project. In fact, it was through working as a teacher assistant in this program that I first observed the limitations of a dual language approach in a multilingual environment that first sparked my interest in doing the research I have done for this project. While my position remained the same as it had historically been during the duration of this project, I noticed several changes in my behavior relative to my position after beginning my research. The first change was a concerted effort to learn Spanish from my students rather than merely allowing my students to use Spanish as a tool for understanding among themselves. In attempting to learn from my students I asked for material to be translated orally from English to Spanish more often. In the past, students would spontaneously translate for each other or I would elicit translation only if a student indicated they didn't understand. Once I was engaged in my research, however, I used student translations to both facilitate student understanding and support my own language acquisition. I also began to listen more intently to student conversations. Rather than assuming I wouldn't understand, I sought moments to listen to student conversations and attempted to make as much meaning as I could from the words that were said. Less intentional were the changes in attitude I noticed in myself. I found myself more sympathetic to my student's language acquisition process. I had difficulty connecting my teacher identity to my language learner identity at times. As a language learner I was uncomfortable speaking in my new language in public. Yet as a teacher I was instructed to require that my students do so. This included making fewer assumptions about the permanent nature of student learning from previous lessons and being more empathetic to student experiences during the language acquisition process.

## Appendix 2: Teaching Reading in Multilingual Classrooms, Language Acquisition Methods

Teaching Reading in Multilingual Classrooms			
Language Acquisition Methods			
Method	Page	Description	Notes
Literacy through a content theme	10-16	Themes based on big questions that relate to students lives are used to teach literacy rich interdisciplinary content knowledge through naturally repeated vocabulary	Similar to a backwards design and differentiating curriculum approach. Emphasis is on teaching learning objectives but added element is theme which allows for more visual/natural connections. Interdisciplinary emphasis. Texts provided at different levels with same basic information.
Daily Schedules	17-20	Predictable units of time in which similar activities occur directed at creating a rich literary environment in which language acquisition can occur	Provides predictability and increases comprehensible input for students.
Cross Aged Tutoring	59-61	Creation of a Literacy Club in which older students tutor younger students. Older students receive extensive training in appropriate book selection, reading comprehension strategies and seminar techniques.	Younger learners benefit from the assistance of a more competent peer. Older students learn reading strategies, refine skills and gain confidence. Students can learn about new cultures and work with others from their own culture.
Strategy Lessons	90-95	Sociopsycholinguistic approach utilized in the book is supported by reading strategy instruction lessons. Lessons have the following characteristics: they are public & take place in a social setting, highlights one cuing system w/in authentic text, focuses on natural strategies, supports & focuses the reader.	Emphasis is on students learning from teacher and other students. Social, open nature of instruction important. Student ability to read for meaning is at the forefront. Sample strategy lessons in book.

Washington State. Division of Refugee Assistance. Tutoring ESL: A Handbook for Volunteers. Tacoma, WA: Tacoma Community House Training Project, 2001.

Tutoring ESL: A Handbook for Volunteers			
Language Acquisition Methods			
Method	Page	Description	Notes
Total Physical response (TPR)	42-43	Asks student to understand and show comprehension by responding to a command with action. Good for beginning language learners. Imperative form mimics language of	Can be used as a warm up, transition or lesson pick me up. Can be used one-on-one or with groups. Teacher should model commands. Vocabulary introduced

		childhood. Commands can be adjusted for skill levels & include complex motions.	should be represented physically.
Introducing new learning	30-31	A structured method for introducing new learning during tutoring/class time. Review (questioning, matching, verbalizing information from last session) Present (match vocabulary with items, act out verbs & tenses, present a dialogue, discussion)- Practice (pair, small group, whole group interactive activities)-Apply (personalize learning through dialogue or role-playing).	Method provides a structure that can be applied to a variety of learning topics. Zone of proximity structure. Lessons can build upon each other. Application processes can integrate a variety of real-world situations (such as building upon medical vocabulary to discuss dialogue used at doctors office)
Visual Aids	36-37	Visual aids can be used to teach vocabulary, expand TPR activities, and as props for dialogue. Visual aids include the actual physical object being discussed (such as a lemon), models (plastic lemon), or a picture or sketch (representation of lemon). Present new concept or vocabulary in writing & out loud. Introduce visual aid & present again. Clarify & question for understanding. Review next lesson.	The best pictures are in color without text. Keep a picture file and box of items as they are acquired. Can be used to incorporate culture of students and introduce English words for familiar locations, clothing and activities. Whole group, small group or pair discussions on concepts and/or vocabulary related to visual aids possible.
Questioning	39-41	Can be used as a warm up, review, assessment or acquisition activity. Questions can require yes/no, either/or, what/who/where or open ended responses as appropriate for student language level. Questions can be based on personal life of students or concepts/vocabulary & may encompass both.	Pair, small group or whole group activity. Works in mixed level classroom through modeling & offering of questions targeted to a variety of levels. Can be used for content acquisition or to get to know students.
Language Experience Approach for Reading (LEA)	53-54	Uses students own spoken English as text for reading. Method makes direct connection between meaning and written word. First, students are engaged in conversation about an activity, experience, or picture. Teacher writes down words exactly. Teacher reads story aloud while student reads along quietly. Student can make changes or corrections at this point. Then, use text for several reading exercises such as underlining key words, circling all words that begin with the same letter, cutting the story into parts & reassembling, asking questions about the story, etc. Students can draw picture of story. Save stories & have students return to them to improve as skills develop.	Can be used in one-on-one, small group or class group situations. Stories can be compiled into text, worked with in various creative ways. Subject could be content based and/or draw on real life experiences. Art component easily incorporated. Students can also read stories aloud to class, teacher, lower level students or younger peers.
Topical Lesson Planning	80-83	Topics or themes are starting point. Use topic/theme to determine what it	Topics/themes can be content and/or real world based. Resultant

		is you want students to learn, and then plan activities to get there. Activities should follow review, present, practice, apply structure.	learning & activities can be interdisciplinary. Lesson plans can be assessed to determine length of time spent of various skill areas (reading, writing, etc)
Vocational ESL (VESL)	95-108	Language acquisition structured around employment needs. Emphasis is on job search, world of work language, task language and social language. Visual aids & role play incorporated. Speaking, listening, reading & writing skills taught through activities designed to assist with job acquisition and maintenance.	Activities should begin with student employment interests and be tailored to individual as much as possible. Actual materials, such as job applications and want ads, should be offered. One-on-one, small group or whole class activity. Real world based, may have content connections (especially for Language Arts).
Repetition & Substitution Drills	113-114	In repetition, teacher says word, phrase, sentence or question while using modeling and/or visual aid to reinforce meaning. Student repeats word/phrase/sentence/question at least once. In substitution, teacher says word/phrase/sentence/question & uses visual aid. Student repeats once. Then teacher uses a new visual aid to change one component of speech (e.g. I need a blouse to I need a skirt). Student says new word/phrase/question/sentence.	Can be used for vocabulary acquisition, putting vocabulary in context, working with tenses and singular/plural issues (transformation drill).

## Equity in Education Legal Database

Rich Coker

*Note: The main outcome of my independent project is a web-based database. This database is free and will remain so. Those who want copies of the database can acquire them by emailing the author at richard.coker@gmail.com. As they become available, updates and new versions will occasionally be sent to those who have requested a copy of the database.*

### **A Statement of Purpose, Process, and Project**

The Equity in Education Legal Database is meant to be an accessible and practically useful tool for teachers to understand education law. Because many aspects of the field of education are highly politicized, an understanding of how education law affects the field is useful for all involved. Unfortunately, the laws of our nation are often intimidating and confusing for those who are not legal professionals, and even for some who are. There are many laws and court decisions we govern ourselves by. They all use legal-jargon language and are difficult for teachers, parents, and students to understand what their rights are and how they can defend them.

In any rule-based situation, whether it be legal, corporate, athletic, or otherwise, it is often difficult to understand how and why a rule or law works until it needs to be interpreted and applied to an actual situation. If this were not so, one could learn the strategy of basketball simply by reading the NBA rulebook. For this reason, what is allowed and disallowed in our nation is determined as much through the laws passed by the legislature as the decisions made by the courts. Knowledge of these court decisions is often even less accessible than the laws themselves. The Equity in Education Legal Database includes many important and influential court decisions, as well as the laws with which they interact. Each can be accessed from the other through simple links for reference.

Another reason for the inaccessibility of laws and court decisions is the language used—legal jargon. Legal jargon may be necessary for specificity in laying out a law or a decision, but is also difficult for the layman to understand. In the database, potentially confusing legal jargon is identified and in-text links provide understandable definitions.

Teachers, parents, and students can use this database to quickly answer their initial questions on how the law affects them without the assistance of professional legal counsel. When students and families are treated inequitably, teachers may be one of the first potential advocates. As professionals within the education field, it is important to understand both how to access the law and how it has been interpreted in order to advocate and inform our students and their families. Because of this, the database is wholly devoted to equity in education regarding students' rights.

Much research went into the creation of this database, but still it is not exhaustive. Equity topics in the law are extensive, and there are many specific situations that may not be addressed (yet) within the database. Hopefully, if the initial database is found to be useful, further versions will extend the scope of the project to cover equity as fully as possible, and perhaps broaden the project into other areas of education law such as expression rights and education financing.

## Re-Teaching Algebra: Discovery Process

Kacie Dill

*“To state a theorem and then to show examples of it is literally to teach backwards” (Eves, 1988).*

Ok, so *reTeaching* isn't a word. But it is an idea, ask the teachers who teaches Algebra I to seniors who have had the same class for four years, they'll tell you they reTeach. Algebra I is the gateway math class and it is also an indicator of student academic success, graduation rate, and technical careers (Heinrich, Jordan, Smalley, & Boast, 2005; Neild & Balfanz, 2006). Students in any class that reTeaches Algebra arrived there because they were not successful. The traditional method for dealing with these students is to put them in a class that focuses on the skills, routine, and practice. For many students, this is the same reason they are taking Algebra again. Today we see teachers working with students in different way – using Blooms taxonomy, Gardners Multiple Intelligences, and authentic problem solving. These idea are applicable in the reTeaching Algebra I classroom.

### Discovery Process

I begin my inquiry with the parameters that all humans are born wired to do mathematics (Devlin, 2000, 2005). Our brains and senses are pattern sensing machines. The brain connects experiences, thoughts, emotions, logic, and intelligences together in the neural networks (Johnson, 2004; Wolfe, 2001). One can recall an event and be sad or scared, as if the event had just happened (Johnson, 2004; Wolfe, 2001). Just as one can be sad or scared from memory recall, one can also remember the experiences of discoveries and understanding that the student developed on their own. In school mathematics becomes symbolic representation of the informal built in math logic. In a classroom where Algebra is being reTaught there is a sea of students who have not made the correct connections in their neural webs. Many are being taught in the same way that did not build the connection the first time.

I'm positing that when teachers question and examine how student are being taught and use a discovery approach it could have a positive effect on student achievement. In this paper when I refer to discovery process it means the collection of pedagogies where student activity such as; constructions, destructions, and inquiry, is combine using cooperative cultural responsive methods. When I applied group work, discovery, and constructions in my classroom students self-reported an increase in enjoyment and memory of the mathematics. The same idea was echoed at the Northwest Mathematics Conference 2007. It is not the subject matter, but how we are presenting it. We should be looking at the example and trying to figure out the theorem. Many students may get the math if it is presented in a different way. Students should build a genuine interest in the mathematics of their experiences. They should look at authentic real-world problems and search for 'best solutions'. In reality there are no 'right solutions' just better solutions, discovery pedagogy allows students to produce these solutions.

### Research

In an article Shinkfields promotes the discovery method that, “[l]earners need to be active...” (Shinkfield, 2007, p. 36). In the study I “... wanted to see if my students could be more active in their learning, and I realized that this would require a change in approach from me as

well as from them” (pg 36). One example mentioned is an assignment that asked students to make up a story about a graph. It was a line graph with an obvious beginning, middle, and end. The student were asked to write a story about what happened where it started, in the middle and at the end of graph. This assignment taps into students writing abilities of creating a story using their imagination, and allows them to show understanding of graph interpretation. Shinkfield calls on teachers to examine of how we are teaching. “In order to promote mathematical thinking and asserting behaviour, it was necessary to instigate a change in milieu, with a corresponding change to the didactic contract that had previously been established in the class,”(Shinkfield, 2007, p. 202). In this case he used activity, creativity, and he tapped into students other modes of learning – writing, story telling, group work and imagination.

Suh & Moyer conducted a study with students using real (physical) and virtual (online) balances to teach the concept of balancing an equation. The idea of the equals sign as a balance is by far a valid idea and concept to cover. Students reportedly believe that the equal sign indicates the answer rather than an equality(Knuth, Stephens, McNeil, & Alibali, 2006). The study by Knuth supports the notion that students struggle with the concept of the equals signs. Without understanding in-depth what the equals signs means students will struggle and fall short in math (Knuth et al., 2006). In a report on manipulatives, by Suh, students were given play time with balances, differentiation, and directed written re-enforcement and asked to display their thinking in a variety of ways. In this program the kinesthetic approach of using physical balances with weights and using an online Virtual Balance were used.

[S]tudents worked to translate word problems to pictures, pictures to manipulative models, manipulative models to algebraic expressions and algebraic expressions to written and verbal explanations (Suh & Moyer, 2007, p. 162).

Students experienced a class where they were encouraged to develop their own understanding of equals. Suh reports “...[what worked were] (a) tactile features; (b) more opportunities for invented strategies; and (c) more mental mathematics,” (2007, p. 164). This study emphasizes the physical and active portion of an otherwise static concept – the equal sign. In the end,

“Student’s exposure to multiple representations of algebraic relationships allowed them to translate among pictorial, manipulative, symbolic, and written representations and to develop representational fluency,”(Suh & Moyer, 2007, p. 170).

In this study the discovery process relies on the physical manipulation and inventive strategies to learn the big idea and multiple representations to represent it. Students were pushed in a variety of methods simultaneously. One reason to use the discovery process is a phenomenon called Einstellung effect.

Einstellung effect is how a person is predisposed to solve a problem(Abramovich & Ehrlich, 2007). For example a given student always does addition of two digit numbers in the standard row and column format. Even when given numbers like ten added to forty the student will always resort to solving the problem by first adding the zeros then adding the one and the four to get fifty. I’ve had one student I believe had Einstellung effect. He was unable to solve the same math problem if the right and left side of the equation were swapped. This type of student may or may not do well in the traditional math classroom. Abramovich & Ehrlich taught using computers in order to combat the , (2007). For example, some concepts in Algebra lend

themselves to geometry. Computer Manipulatives give students the tools to see what is happening graphically while a mathematical operation being performed (Abramovich & Ehrlich, 2007). This study relied on computers to take the repetition and monotony out of the mathematics to take an overall look at the pattern.

Integration of subjects provides yet another access point for discovery based mathematics. Marshall, Horton & Austin-Wade, found that integrating math and sciences reduces the redundancy of teaching concepts. “Investigating something that appears trivial, such as studying a bouncing ball, provides a concrete way for student to grasp the meaning associated with otherwise abstract concepts such as distances versus time, velocity versus time, or acceleration versus time graphs,” (Marshall, Horton, & Austin-Wade, 2007, p. 39). Integration of math and science begins with looking at basic concepts in both once the basic concept is understood, the math task becomes more difficult. Student began by looking at the behaviors of a bouncing ball and then, “...using details provided in the movie, student use their knowledge of physics and mathematics to determine whether the bus could have made the jump: they must justify their conclusions and state all assumptions” (Marshall et al., 2007, p. 40). Marshall also provides us with an idea for beginning interdisciplinary studies. “[C]oordinating one major concept per quarter with another discipline provides a great start... Find a math, history, literature, or art course that most of your students currently are enrolled in and seek to understand the standards and objectives for that course – you will be surprised the number of authentic connections that can be made with a little effort,” (Marshall et al., 2007, p. 41). The assignments in this interdisciplinary classes use investigation, application and authentic learning.

When math is taught using a discovery processes looking at the real world issues the, “...students who had completed such problems in previous years were more capable of dealing with complex and challenging mathematical situations than students who had not,” (Zawojewski & McCarthy, 2007, p. 36). Because these world authentic problem solving were high cognitive demand mathematical tasks students retained more. Zawojewski reports that because the students had a base in thinking through real-world problems they were ready to think about more complex math concepts. When students have spent time creating math collaboratively their level of mathematics savvy and the creativity of their math ideas improve. Students are expected to work in groups, think about real-world problems, develop their own understanding, create new ways of thinking, and critically explore the world around them. When, “groups present their solutions to the class, they are encouraged to articulate further and be more flexible and creative as their teacher and peers seek clarification, pose questions, and challenge solutions,” (Zawojewski & McCarthy, 2007, p. 34). This is what we, as math teachers, want incoming students to be able to do.

So, now, what does this look like? Using the criteria from the above studies for discovery process, I'll evaluate a variety of text based and non-text base curricula. Using the Evergreen State College's resource room, ERIC, Summit, and various online sources I researched over 24 different curriculums that responded to the query: Algebra & Discovery Process. Table 1 lists out tools, online sources, and curriculums that I found to be particularly exemplary in one way or another of discovery process and ask the question does this promote discovery math.

I have found that most of the books that get reported under the terms Algebra & Discovery are workbooks. They tend to be workbooks that focus on ethnomathematics. There is a place for these books in the well-rounded classroom, but they are by far lacking in the substance of curriculum. One of the better types of this book that I reviewed was called *Math Smart*. *Math Smart* (Muschla & Muschla, 2002) is a good addition to a curriculum as it focus on

practice and provides student with access points to various cultures. Upon reviewing this book I noted that the highly capable student may be able to take off and fly with this book.

Another type curriculum was the math novel. The appeal is for students that like to read and problem solve but does not self-identify as good at math. These books are put together in a discovery basis, asking students to examine the world presented in the book. Two books like this are *Math Hysteria* (Stewart, 2004) and *The Life of Fred* (Schmidt, 2002). *The Life of Fred* is a math novel. Fred is six years old, a genius, and he's the one explaining the math. Because he's six, he uses easy language and concrete examples in his life. The book is well written, entertaining and above all it reaches out students who have weakens in math. *Math Hysteria* is a collection of short stories. There are twenty different stories, each one can stand alone. Each story has an Algebra concept, history or factoid and explains where one would see this pattern or where one would use this math concept. There are no problem banks in *Math Hysteria*.

What about traditional curriculum – teacher's book, student's books, and online assistance? The best text based curriculums for discovery process, that I reviewed were *Algebra Hands On, Inc.* (Pfau et al., 1993), the curriculum Connected Math Program 2 –reviewed for this research were *Thinking with mathematical models* (Lappan, Fey, Fitzgeralds, Friel, & Phillips, 2006d) and *Growing, Growing, Growing* (Lappan, Fey, Fitzgeralds, Friel, & Phillips, 2006b), as well as two books for the previous years in the CMP2 curriculum – *Bits and Pieces II* (Lappan, Fey, Fitzgeralds, Friel, & Phillips, 2006a) and *Shapes and Designs* (Lappan, Fey, Fitzgeralds, Friel, & Phillips, 2006c). These curriculums encourage students to discover and express mathematics on their own terms. Activities, investigations and inquiries align with standards. In *Algebra Hands On, Inc* the Algebra concepts range in concepts from kindergarten to ninth grade.

For my non-text based sources I googled the term reteaching Algebra and returned no hits (reteaching is not a word), then I googled Algebra and it returned too many hits. Looking at my research I, the text curriculum, and what I wanted my final decision was Algebra + Online curriculum. This returned a significant number of resources and I continued until I ran into a long string of stuff I'd already reviewed. For brevity I'll stick to the overall theme, what to look for, and decisions to make when doing an online curriculum as a resource, supplement, or theme. For a partial list that I reviewed, please see appendix (O)nline.

As a reminder, the point of this research is to come up with other ways of learning Algebra. When doing online research and searching through online materials be wary! There are websites that were photocopies of text books. This does not fit in with our discovery process. This type of website works for the same type of student that does well reading the book. The next type of website has written explanations of what's happening and will show out multiple problems step by step, describing the steps along the way. These websites are good for review for students or for additional reinforcement of ideas. Websites that are a little better have written explanations, step by step directions, and places for the student to check their levels of understanding while getting feedback. The feedback in this case tends to be static – right or wrong, and may provide the correct answer. The last and best type, of non-text based curriculum has dynamic feedback. In some cases the student will be stopped as soon as a mistake is made and the correct process will be shown on the side. Others provide step-by-step diagnosis to compare the equation the student did to the correct answer. Still others look like games and require extensive thinking on the part of the student. Prior to using non-text based curriculum, teachers must verify that the website is worthwhile.

## Next Steps

The next steps in the process are to actually get into a classroom of my own and work on building a solid curriculum. I would like to gather enough material to one day write my own reTeaching Algebra I series.

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## Appendices

Appendix 1: Table with Example of Exemplary reTeaching Tools & Discovery Process point

Appendix 2: Annotated Websites

### Appendix 1: Table with Example of Exemplary reTeaching Tools & Discovery Process point

	Teacher or student?	Inquiry	Construct	Multi-intelligence	Pose Questions	Investigation	Creativity	Zones-o-Proximity	Variety problem solving methods	Skeptic	Corporate Learning *	Present solutions	Authentic Solutions
<a href="http://www.algebra-lab.org/">http://www.algebra-lab.org/</a>	T	/	/			/					/		
<a href="http://www.montereyinstitute.org/courses/Algebra%20IA/nroc%20prototype%20files/coursestartc.html">http://www.montereyinstitute.org/courses/Algebra%20IA/nroc%20prototype%20files/coursestartc.html</a>	T / S			K Tech				/	/				
Hands-On Algebra	T	/	/	K Sp Lo	/	/	/		/	/	/	/	
Life-of Fred	S			Lan gua ge	/		/					/	
CMP/CMP2	T	/	/	K Art Lan gua ge	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
<a href="http://nlvm.usu.edu/en/nav/category_g_4_t_2.html">http://nlvm.usu.edu/en/nav/category_g_4_t_2.html</a>	S			Tec h	/	/	/	/					
<a href="http://renzullilearning.com/LearnMaps.aspx?type=Critical">http://renzullilearning.com/LearnMaps.aspx?type=Critical</a>	T	/	/	Loa ds	/	/	/		/	/	/	/	Pse udo
<a href="http://www.tolerance.org/teach/magazine/features.jsp?p=0&amp;is=42&amp;ar=895&amp;ttnewsletter=ttnewsgen-021408">http://www.tolerance.org/teach/magazine/features.jsp?p=0&amp;is=42&amp;ar=895&amp;ttnewsletter=ttnewsgen-021408</a>	T	/	/		/	/	/	/	/		/	/	/

## Appendix 2: Annotated Websites

<http://www.time4learning.com/algebra.htm> - Time 4 Learning. Online, multimedia, traditional style of learning, just online. (19.95 pre month) good for remediation, preteaching, and teaching.. seems to be aligned with EARLS

[http://www.homeschoolmath.net/curriculum\\_reviews/curriculum\\_materials.php](http://www.homeschoolmath.net/curriculum_reviews/curriculum_materials.php) - kinda a clearing house for cheap/free curriculum.

[http://www.xpmath.com/ebooks/math\\_ebooks.php#mathebook0](http://www.xpmath.com/ebooks/math_ebooks.php#mathebook0) – online algebra books. Free, free, free.

<http://www.hippocampus.org/?course=1> HippoCampus – good for students who are dutiful learners, but aren't getting it on their own. Best use, when instructors can pullout specific topics, choices for student to reduce redundancy and to streamline student's independent efforts. Much like a traditional text, but steps you though using graphics.

<http://www.jamesbrennan.org/algebra/> Understanding Algebra, online text by Brennan, James W. Boring, text only. Good for students wanting to review or who just need the basics to review. I would not use

<http://www.kineticbooks.com/downloads/index.php> online -downloadable. You may be able to get a trial version of this into your classroom. Interactive and step by step instruction. Also, program will step through problem verbally.

[http://www.venturaes.com/curriculum/algebra\\_concepts/](http://www.venturaes.com/curriculum/algebra_concepts/) Online, static pages, but manipulative/pictorial explanations along with text.

<http://www.algebra1lab.org/> LOVE IT! This is a resource for teachers for teaching Algebra I through labs. Not for students, for teachers..

<http://www.montereyinstitute.org/courses/Algebra%20IA/nroc%20prototype%20files/coursestartc.html> This is an online course for individuals in Intro Algebra I. I don't believe it teaches everything that is required by WA Law/EARLS. Good for students over breaks, late starters in class, students transferring from other schools, and for plain old-reTeaching when students are in higher math. Videos, interactive. All around OK.

<http://www.learner.org/channel/courses/learningmath/algebra/index.html> This has a variety of session with access to online pdf versions of the texts students may need to complete the session. Hints, videos, and answers to homework. The answers are static and don't make perfect sense. Use with caution, be able to warn students of pitfalls.

[http://www.studysphere.com/Site/Sphere\\_3980.html](http://www.studysphere.com/Site/Sphere_3980.html) A list of algebra help sites all lessons available in real audio, making this a good choice for students who are audio learners and for those who just need a review. Static Pages.

<http://members.aol.com/algebrahelp/calcs.htm> links to tons of cool calculators and equation calculators. If giving these out to students teacher must know how to use and which one they prefer. Could also be a student project to evaluate these calculators based on what they need them to do when. Could be a cool year long project.

[http://www.dgee.org/wiki/Problem\\_Solving\\_in\\_Algebra#Explore:\\_Understand\\_the\\_Problem](http://www.dgee.org/wiki/Problem_Solving_in_Algebra#Explore:_Understand_the_Problem) I expect great things from wiki, but this site did not provide. However, Keep checking back as this is the sort of thing that wikki does well.

[http://www.trutv.com/forensics\\_curriculum/](http://www.trutv.com/forensics_curriculum/) this site has information about other sites, but all the sites have been edited, really overall a good site.

## **Facilitating Group Success in Lower Elementary Grades**

Jeff Ennett

*This paper was researched and written to identify several methods elementary school teachers may find helpful in establishing and facilitating group work success. I chose this topic because throughout my lesson planning in first grade, I felt it was difficult to implement group work into my lessons due to the age level of the students and because there was no group work system in place. Through this research I focus on what practices can be implemented at these levels to make present and future group work experiences successful.*

### **Setting up the Classroom Environment: Realizing the Potential of Group Work**

Cooperative group work methods with elementary school students have been well documented as an effective teaching method over the past two decades (Sharan, 1994; Veenman, Kenter, & Post, 1999). Educational research has confirmed increases in student learning as a result of the cooperative group experience correlated with parallel increases in student self esteem, social skills, and positive socialization with peers (Cohen 1994; Ng & Lee, 1999; Shechtman, Gilat, Foss, & Flasher, 1996).

Similar studies have confirmed students participating in cooperative group work demonstrated increased tolerance and acceptance of others with ethnic, cultural, and social differences. This includes increased acceptance of handicapped classmates and the strengthening of inter-group relationships (Cohen, 1994; Johnson & Johnson, 1989; Ng & Lee, 1999; Sharan, 1994; Slavin, 1995). Cooperative group work holds the promise for students to receive a more useful education that enhances their practices of good citizenship.

Throughout the school year, the teacher should practice cooperative group work and model personal valuing and respect of diversity in the heterogeneous nature of the class. Discussing and demonstrating this helps students realize they are valuable resources to each other during group work sessions in and out of the classroom. If administered appropriately, cooperative group work functions both as a highly effective method of teaching and holds the potential to function as a subtle yet significant method of classroom management (Cohen, 1994). However, laying the foundation for the development of effective group work depends on a number of factors all of which must be planned for and carried out by the teacher prior to the first day of class.

### **Necessary Planning and Preparation**

It is important that the teacher initiates establishing cooperative group work as both a fun and exciting activity for everyone. The physical setting of the classroom should contain numerous eye-catching posters depicting students having fun in various stages of the cooperative group work experience. In addition, the classroom should have informational postings of special group work role titles such as Facilitator, Reporter, Checker, Time Keeper, Clean Up, Safety Officer, and others which list specific descriptions of their individual job duties assigned to each role. An example of this is the "Group work Bill of Rights". The role of Facilitator may be excluded in lower elementary grades due to its demands on the student.

The teacher should make frequent references to these rules, repeating and referencing them throughout the students' group work pre-training period until they become internalized as

norms of group work conduct for each student (Cohen & Benton, 1988; Slavin, 1995). Early experiential preparation of young students working within the structure and rules governing cooperative groups may be enhanced through preparation games played in class such as Broken Circle, Jigsaws and Master Designer (Cohen, 1994). These suggestions provide the pre-learning group students a “taste” of the group cooperative experience and the fun of team building activities as a preview of what they may expect in future cooperative learning groups.

Prior to the actual identification and selection of students participating in an initial cooperative group work experience, students need to be instructed in how group work functions and what the student should expect of the overall process (Cohen, 1994; Johnson & Johnson, 1989; Sharan, 1994; Slavin, 1995). These concepts can be difficult for a young student to collectively understand and see in action. To be most effective, other avenues of teaching group work must be sought to enhance and reinforce the cooperative nature of group work. The teacher may accomplish this by introducing a video presentation of cooperative group work that students can see in action (Mandel, 1991).

Another teaching method is the live-action learning experience. For example, a second-grade teacher can arrange a visit to a third/fourth-grade classroom to witness the cooperative learning groupwork model in action. This provides real live samples of positive and effective cooperative group work, given that the third/fourth-grade students are older; second-grade students will look up to these students and want to emulate the overall process, greatly enhancing the possibility of its effectiveness in the classroom. It is important after this experience that major rules, processes, and protocols governing successful cooperative learning are stated and reinforced to be consistently used by students during group work sessions.

During the introductory phase of group work, the teacher will continue to make it clear that many different kinds of students’ abilities are needed to accomplish group work goals. Further, no one student will be able to provide all of the abilities needed, but everyone will be good in at least one area needed by the group. As a result, once group work is underway, students do not fault themselves for not possessing all abilities needed to reach the group goal but realize and value that what they can provide is recognized as important to the group. This atmosphere serves to greatly weaken the tendency of low-status students to withdraw from group participation (Cohen & Benton, 1988; Veenman, Kenter, & Post, 1999).

The teacher also needs to state repeatedly that disagreements between students will naturally arise, but that disagreements are to be welcomed and can actually be helpful. When appropriately processed, disagreements can lead the group to better solutions developed on the way to attaining the group’s goal. The teacher stresses that there are a variety of special methods for maturely handling disagreements between group work members that will be conducive to the group, and should model a sample of some disagreement resolutions. This is then followed by the teacher leading a debriefing of the learning session (Cohen, 1994; Cohen & Benton, 1988; Veenman, Kenter, & Post, 1999). The teacher should stress to students that their learning about this kind of group processing and group dynamics over the school year will enable them to be better prepared to participate in future group work opportunities that will become available in upper grades.

In selecting students for various cooperative groups it is important that the teacher ensures each group is as heterogeneous as possible with high, middle, and low ability achievers comprising each group. Low and medium achievers will benefit from academic and social skills scaffolding. It has been similarly demonstrated that high achievers learn more in team-

cooperative efforts involving middle and low achieving peers than working independently (Cohen, 1994; Cohen & Benton, 1988; Webb, 1992).

Working to accomplish group work goals and carrying out individual accountability through assignment of roles/duties as part of the group stimulates students to help each other and encourage maximum effort (Slavan, 1995). When students are rewarded for their performance in each role of the group, they are more inclined to help each other see that everyone in the group knows what they are supposed to do and contribute to the group product (Veenman, Kenter, & Post, 1999). The teacher should give praise to not only the whole group but also to its individual members to accomplish this. Multiple studies concerning group learning have concluded that cooperative learning is most effective when the group and the individuals comprising it are both recognized and rewarded (Veenman, Kenter, & Post, 1999). The effective teacher in facilitating cooperative group work makes it clear to her/his students that each student is individually accountable for the success of the group (Cohen & Benton, 1988).

### **Maintenance of Group Work**

Positive behavior support and frequently checking in with all groups is crucial to the success of the group work experience. Teachers must not assume that once the groundwork has been established they can sit back and watch the group succeed. The teacher needs to instruct and model active listening skills while promoting and strengthening communication skills within and between group members. Furthermore, the teacher must actively monitor groups to ensure students have not become non-participants or withdrawn during the activity. Intervening when necessary is appropriate to ensure successful communication becomes an ingrained norm in the process. Teaching young students how to paraphrase what they have heard in feedback to fellow group members is an essential part of this effort. Students that are new to cooperative group learning need to be taught that the major goal of group work is for all members of the group to collectively contribute in their own special way in helping the group as a whole. In this process, the group openly shares discussions of various problem solving techniques and a new form of learning is achieved. This learning process is student driven and reinforces the individual and group understanding of carrying out individual responsibilities leading to the eventual achievement of the group goal (Cohen, 1994; Slavin, 1995).

Every class is composed of students who for a variety of reasons refuse to participate in group work or remain withdrawn. Some are anxious, fearful, or may have previously found the experience humiliating. For these students it is important that the group work exercises noted should continue to be part of the regular classroom routine after cooperative group work has been initiated for the whole class. With regular cooperative learning groups established, the teacher or teacher aide can work with reluctant students in verbal skill building through the techniques of Mutual Story Telling, Draw & Tell, Bag of Things Game, and similar practices to enhance groupwork participation (Gardner, 1975).

In that every cooperative group in the class differs in nature by its composition from other groups, reluctant students participating in skill building will neither have to feel different nor struggle with the stigma of being assigned to a special group for lower skilled students, a major factor in student non-participation and continued resistance to participate in group work. To further normalize the process to all students, group randomization and rotation methods are necessary for students to become comfortable and successful in the setting.

To attain the maximum potential that cooperative group work offers to the curriculum for elementary school students, supervision of consistency in practice and administration of the

group work process needs to be as closely adhered to as possible from one grade to the next. This requires ongoing collaboration and meetings between teachers throughout the school year. For younger students in the first three to four years of elementary school, it is especially important that the cooperative group work model is practiced consistently and facilitated in identical operation for the duration of a full school year. This means that teachers will need to consistently collaborate on a weekly basis to ensure the required rules of group work operation decided upon are carried out consistently and identically practiced to the greatest extent in each K-4 class (Cohen, 1994; Veenman, Kenter, & Post, 1999).

### **Teacher's Role in Successful Cooperative Learning Groups**

When the class is ready for group work and formed into respective groups the teacher's role shifts. The teacher must now delegate group work roles to each student to be carried out during the activity. The students are now put in charge of ensuring each member of their group is giving and receiving help from every other student, all working collectively in pursuit of achieving the group goal. This allows the teacher to drift from between groups, listening and observing the student discussions. The teacher asks guiding questions and facilitates discussions without controlling the group. This also includes intervention to provide feedback for corrective action in enabling the group to collectively get itself back on track if becoming off-topic. The teacher frequently references the postings of students' roles and job responsibilities along with reinforcing rules governing group work processing (Cohen & Benton, 1998).

*Research has demonstrated a direct, positive correlation between the level of the teacher's focus questions and interactions and the subsequent critical thinking level of the students in that group (Mandel, 1991). In a review of the effects of cooperative learning group work it was concluded that meeting all learning, socialization, and group cohesiveness goals were most effectively met when groups were recognized or rewarded on the basis of the individual learning of each member. Group goals and individual accountability stimulated students to help each other and encouraged maximum effort (Cohen, 1994; Mandel, 1991; Slavan, 1995).*

### **Teacher Interviews**

As part of this paper I interviewed two teachers, Ms. Brock in second, and Ms. Malick in third grade at the same elementary school. I asked them various questions about the group work process and how they implemented it into their curriculum. Ms. Malick's room was set up for group work but the desks were in traditional rows due to accommodating a student. She used group work throughout the curriculum and especially during reading buddy time. Ms. Malick felt rotating groups, jobs, and roles helped sustain positive classroom management. During group work exercises, she actively checks for student understanding by encouraging individual students and the group to verbalize answers. Additionally she reinforces skills, has students focus on their jobs, and doing their part in the group. Ms. Malick felt that when facilitating group work the teacher must maintain an active role and be able to bring the students back on task. She felt that the group work perspective is established in students by third grade and success is subsequently built upon this in later grades. One interesting tool she utilized was a partner clock in which the hands corresponding to possible partners would rotate when moved in a group activity (Malick, 2008).

In interviewing Ms. Brock much of the already noted techniques were mentioned when interviewing Ms. Malick. In Ms. Brock's classroom students were seated around round desks rather than tables. She explained that due to this her students were more apt to work together and had even developed a system for accomplishing tasks like cleaning tables. Having enough materials for everybody at the table was noted to decrease possible conflicts. She explained not to assume that because students sit together they will work together; the teacher must establish routines and boundaries in activities and at the tables. If a student is having difficulties in the group work experience, the teacher would appropriately work with the student to resolve the situation, and this could mean switching groups if necessary. Ms. Brock felt that teaching the students how to treat each other and value encouragement within the group led to success. Additionally, class values, team language, creating a safe community, and incentives for individual and group success were noted as tools to foster a successful group work experience. Ms. Brock explained that her students rarely worked alone and that teachers should find group work activities across all subject areas (Brock, 2008).

Both teachers stressed that positive behavior support was the most important aspect of the group work experience. Furthermore, it was noted by both teachers that students should get accustomed to working in groups as early as possible. In future grades students will need to learn how to evaluate themselves, others, and the overall success of the group. Providing students with a background in group work will better prepare them for success and successful interactions with others. Ms. Malick and Ms. Brock felt that collaboration between teachers was of critical importance in that the type of group work system should not deviate much between grades to avoid confusion. Both noted that it should be a positive experience to be built upon in the future (Brock, 2008; Malick, 2008)

### ***The Future of Group Work***

There is little observational data on the nature of interactive behavior among students specific to cooperative group work sessions including what specifically occurs in mental processing by elementary school age students (Mandel, 1991; Veenman, Kenter, & Post, 1999). Research on the questioning, thinking, and interaction between students during cooperative group work is needed, including refinement of what constitutes the most effective monitoring, providing of feedback, and debriefing of students after the group work activity (Mandel, 1991; Veenman, Kenter, & Post, 1999). Success for students with a wide range of personal learning styles including disabilities and their integration into the group work process is an area of further needed research (Cohen, 1994; Mandel, 1991). Future administrative developments for cooperative group work in schools should include training and the use of staff support groups for the solution of any problems or questions that may arise during implementation of cooperative group work (Long & Morse, 1996; Veenman, Kenter, & Post, 1999).

### **Conclusion**

In researching this topic I chose to review various journal articles and books that pertained to successful group work practices. I also interviewed teachers to get a field opinion of how they have used group work in their curriculum. Through my accumulated research for this project, I have found that group work can be implemented in a variety of ways in the classroom environment. The curriculum can be centered on this process, or the teacher may choose to use it in specific ways or times. I have learned that there is no one set group work model that works best with students at any age level. One of the difficulties of writing this paper was that there

was limited research it associating specific practices to various grade levels. This means that it is necessary for the individual teacher to interpretate group work practices and adapts this model to fit their teaching needs and the needs of student learning. I found that group work provides exposure to and participation in shared discussion, processing, and increasing cognition with other students, enabling the group to move toward a higher level of thinking and understanding. As this intellectual growth process continues, further expansion in the depth of reasoning and imagination occur that facilitate the development of a multitude of skills and abilities building throughout life.

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## Implementing Learning Groups in Early Childhood Education

Mikki Fredrickson

Learning groups in education is a traditional way of grouping students so that they may practice a skill or set of skills together. Cooperative learning groups is a more progressive technique that involves students working and interacting in a group so that they may accomplish a shared goal. A major goal of cooperative learning groups is that each student will contribute to the learning of the group and that each student will be held individually accountable for his/her learning. As a teacher, implementing cooperative learning groups is a purposeful act and one that requires preparation by the teacher and learning by the students of how to work in cooperative learning groups.

During my student teaching in a general education first grade classroom, I was encouraged by my mentor teacher to conduct a lesson that involved forming cooperative learning groups. As she explained the lesson to me in detail, there was something about it that didn't 'feel right' to me. Although, I needed an awesome lesson for an observation, and she assured me that she had used this particular one for many years and it would suit the purpose. So I went with it. I went over the lesson, wrote a scripted lesson plan, and felt as prepared as possible.

Fortunately, the teacher directed portion of the lesson went fairly well and the students appeared to understand the concept they would be working on in their groups. Although, when the time came to split into groups (heterogeneous groups I had carefully constructed), the classroom as a whole quickly fell apart. Of course I tried redirecting the groups but it was such a disaster that I quickly and quietly put the manipulatives away and had the students return to their desks. When I say *disaster*, I mean that 95% of the students were off task in some obvious way!

After *much* reflection, I had an *aha* moment and realized why I was so uneasy about the lesson. I had organized the students into groups for cooperative learning but I had not taught them how to work in that type of a group. We had not purposefully and constructively worked up to being in cooperative learning groups of four to five students, much less cooperative learning groups at all. But, a valuable lesson learned!

Thus, this is how I came to decide on researching cooperative learning groups. I found that children need to learn the social and intellectual skills of working with other students in cooperative groups and I believe these skills need to be acquired in a progressive manner. Students need to be introduced to these skills and have an opportunity to practice and master them before moving to the next step.

In my search for information about cooperative learning groups in early education, I read journal articles, peer-reviewed and non-peer reviewed, consulted books, and interviewed first grade teachers, whom I considered experienced and of whose opinions I value. It is this collection of information that I use to describe cooperative learning groups and the process that takes place within the groups, as well as present the rationale for using cooperative learning groups versus more traditional methods. Also, I will use the interviews to discuss current classroom practices regarding cooperative learning groups and describe activities for introducing students in early education to the social and intellectual skills needed to work in cooperative groups. I will also describe activities that allow them to practice and build skills in these areas.

In education, there are three types of learning environments an educator may utilize for a lesson: competitive, individualistic, or cooperative. Traditionally, in a teacher-centered learning environment, competitive and individualistic were the primary approaches. In a competitive structure,

the success of one student usually means the failure of others, whereas in an individualistic structure, the success of one student is independent of another student and has no bearing on another student's failures or accomplishments. In a cooperative structure however, the goal of a student is only obtainable if the other person(s) in the group obtain the goal; the success of one student is dependent on the success of the other(s) (Feeley, 1999).

Cooperative learning groups are a strategy for constructivist pedagogy. Within the group, students construct their knowledge by the interactions they have with the other group members. Cooperative learning groups as defined are basically heterogeneous learning groups where the group members share a common goal and each member has an individual task that is considered equally as important as the next in contributing to the group goal. The group goal is only obtainable if each group member participates and fulfills his/her group role and individual task.

There are some basic elements of cooperative groups that need to be met if the social and academic goals are to be achieved. Positive interdependence, individual accountability, and face-to-face (promotive) interactions are three main components of cooperative groups (Brandt, 1991). Positive interdependence is the perception of the group members that the group goal may only be achieved if each member achieves his/her individual goals, whereas individual accountability is the assessment that holds each member of the group accountable for his/her learning and accountable for contributing his/her portion of the task (Feeley, 1999). Face-to-face promotive interactions are the interactions between groups members that promote each other's success by assisting, providing encouragement, and supporting each other (Johnson, 1999). These are communication skills that enable students to facilitate other group members' learning within the group process.

Other important elements of cooperative groups, according to Foyle (1991), are heterogeneous grouping, success of the group – in that students need to experience success in their early efforts to cooperate so they'll have a desire to be in cooperative groups again, and rewards. Rewards can be intrinsic or extrinsic but the key is that the group be rewarded as a whole and the teacher avoids comparing or grading students' academic and social performance of the group activity and individual tasks of the activity. Some examples of rewards can be verbal praise, food rewards, free playtime or extended recess time, an art activity, or participating in a favorite class activity. Foyle reminds us that if the group task/activity is fun, that may be reward enough and no further motivator or reward is necessary.

There are many benefits of using cooperative learning groups. As previously stated, individual accountability is an element of cooperative groups. As the individual student constructs his/her learning through the group processes, many benefits occur. Within the group, individuals (of all academic levels) experience 'group-to-individual' transfer of knowledge/learning so that it can be said that individuals will gain more knowledge and produce higher academic achievement from participating in a cooperative group. Students gain ability for more frequent use of higher level of reasoning strategies, students are provided more support from peers with persistence on challenging tasks and stressful situations, students learn self-reliance and autonomy, and a coherent and integrated self-identity is established (Gabbert, 2001).

Cooperative learning groups are becoming a common strategy for third through twelfth grade teachers who want to facilitate a constructivist learning environment for their students. So the question becomes, how do you prepare and teach early elementary grade students the social and cognitive skills they'll need to be able to participate effectively in cooperative learning groups? I interviewed first grade teachers to find out how they felt about the abilities of first graders in learning groups and what techniques they use to teach their students to become cooperative learners. When asked what kind of learning groups are appropriate for first graders, the teachers' answers ranged from

'only teams of two' to small groups. The partner groups were thought to be beneficial in that they helped students to learn to work together; students progress better with these social skills if they have an opportunity to build their skills within a partner group rather than trying to develop them in larger groups. Also indicated were academically alike groups, same interest groups, and homogenous groups for learning groups that are fluid (teacher meets with the students until the concept is learned and then the group is dissolved) (McCourt, 2008; Peterson, 2008; Rakevick, 2008).

When teachers were asked what type of activities they use to teach their students to work cooperatively, several indicated teaching and practicing basic classroom rules within the group such as using quiet voices, being polite, sharing materials, and taking turns. Communication and organizational skills were thought to be essential in effective groups and the teachers provided students time to practice and master these skills before beginning more academically challenging groups. They also continued to discuss and reflect on these skills throughout the school year. Role modeling negative and positive situations also allowed students to see the effectiveness of positive organization and communication. Also effective for teaching first graders to work collaboratively was to put them in pairs for science, math games, and reading buddies (McCourt, 2008; Peterson, 2008; Rakevick, 2008).

Because cooperative learning can be a fairly new concept to most first graders, I asked the teachers what difficulties there were in teaching students in learning groups and how they addressed those difficulties. The majority of teachers responded that personality and behavior differences between group members were the main difficulties in the ability of the group to be successful. Teachers indicated that it was important to monitor the groups to ensure that one or two members were not dominating the group or the manipulatives and that often, reconfiguring the group was necessary. Another difficulty stated was the lack of ability for first graders to work independently within the group (without direct teacher supervision). One teacher indicated that first graders are coming into school with less preschool or kindergarten experiences and are therefore not ready for the conditions and expectations of a typical first grade classroom. To teach the students to work cooperatively with their peers and ask each other for help, this teacher tells them to always ask three (peers) before asking her (Peterson, 2008).

Finally, I asked the teachers to describe the positive aspects and outcomes of teaching first grade students to work in learning groups with cooperative learning as the goal. They indicated that groups allow students to learn to self-manage, learn to work independently from teacher, and the groups address the needs of high, medium, and low achieving students. Participating in the group can challenge students who are above grade level on certain subjects, and students who are struggling get more focused learning time on the areas needed. Particular to cooperation, teachers stated that the students can learn from one another, and they learn to cooperate with each other, as well as learn to 'get along' with each other (McCourt, 2008; Peterson, 2008; Rakevick, 2008).

In summary of the interviews, the teachers focused on basic social and organizational skills within the group or partner learning and attempted to group students heterogeneously while still considering personalities and behavior. It did appear that these skills were being taught so the students could cooperate and work effectively in pairs and groups but it was less clear as to whether these skills were being taught to specifically prepare the students to work in cooperative learning groups. As Cohen (1994) points out, as did the teachers in the interview, younger groups have the potential for difficulties with behavior and classroom management when learning to work in pairs and groups and therefore may require the teacher to spend more time preparing and teaching the students to work in the cooperative groups. The groups may also need more teacher guidance when beginning cooperative group work and more time to complete the task, although assigning individual roles within the group

and students constructing learning through the group process are still consistent with cooperative groups in early elementary grades.

Through my research, I found specific learning activities and elements to skill building activities that focus on preparing early elementary students to work in cooperative groups. Through these activities, students learn a variety of social and intellectual skills. In cooperative groups they practice conceptual learning, creative problem solving, and oral language proficiency. Also through the group processes they learn to form friendly ties and trust with peers and how to be a positive influence on each other. Often times, students come into the school environment without having practiced or been exposed to these intellectual or social skills and Cohen (1994) discusses the need to prepare students for cooperation.

Introducing students to new cooperative behaviors is what Cohen calls constructing new *norms* for behaving, which are written or unspoken expectations for student behavior. It's important to teach the *norms* through exercises and games, called *skillbuilders*, because students rarely learn new behavior through discussion alone. The key is that the skillbuilder is a fairly simple activity with a clear focus on the target skill, rather than a complex activity that confuses and distracts the students from the target skill. The process of the skillbuilder activity is fairly simple: There is a teacher led discussion that describes the target skill and the activity, then students perform the activity, which is followed by a discussion and reflection about the relevance of the experience to the upcoming group work. Also key to acquiring new norms for cooperative groupwork is that once the student starts to feel that he/she should behave in this way, the norm has been *internalized*. Thus, the desired behavior for the group work will occur and there will be willingness by the group members to enforce the rules within the group.

As I conducted my research, the main source for activities that focuses on cooperative learning groups in early childhood education was *Cooperative Learning in the Early Childhood Classroom* (Foyle, 1991), which is part of the National Education Association Early Childhood Education Series. It provides rationale for cooperative learning as well as specific activities for implementing in preschool-second grade classrooms with some adaptations necessary for developmental level of students. Foyle stresses that the key elements of cooperative learning address the needs of early childhood education (see Appendix A).

When preparing to place students in cooperative groups, Foyle (1991) suggests that age 3½ -5 year old students be placed in pairs and that first and second grade students with good social skills can operate in teams of three to four. Although even when teaching the early grades to work in cooperative groups, it's best to begin with pairs (buddies, partners), even up through third grade. These partner groups can be temporary (just for one day) such as younger pairs who cooperate in tasks, games, or activities that require more than one set of hands. Or, the partner groups can be long-term and the pair can work on activities such as reading (read to one another), cooperatively write and edit each other's stories, or other buddy activities that have the components of interdependence and individual accountability.

For a preschool-kindergarten class, the lesson "Help Dress the Person for Winter" (see Appendix B) is a cooperative partner lesson that focuses on positive interdependence with shared materials. Students at this early age may have a difficult time understanding the concept of interdependence. Foyle suggests using the metaphor of a teeter-totter to help explain the concept: Ask the students if one student alone can play on the teeter-totter and make it go up and down and then ask them what is missing. Students will come to the conclusion that two students are needed to play on the teeter-totter and teacher can use that to compare to the learning activity that requires interdependence.

Another lesson, “The Three Little Pigs” (see Appendix C) is for preschool-kindergarten and could be adapted for ESL students as well. It focuses on assigning roles within the pair group and also language development. Because each student is assigned a role, interdependence comes into play as well as individual accountability because the game calls for each player to take a turn (saying a word). There are also opportunities for students to support each other (if a student needs help with a word) and there is a reward at the end of the game, as well as the opportunity for students to practice social behaviors such as turn taking and sharing supplies. Finally, the teacher is able to monitor and evaluate the behaviors of the group and plan for evaluation/feedback. When a team reaches the end of the game the teacher asks them to tell about one time they took turns (reflecting on a target skill).

Paired group building activities allow students to build trust in others, as well as building communication skills. “Getting to Know You” (See Appendix D) is an activity that requires students to get into pairs and then use visual and auditory discrimination to answer teacher questions about their partner. This activity can be adapted in length for different age groups, but the questions should remain simple. Remember, the key is that the students are successful in their task! Foyle offers group-building activities as well and reminds us that group and pair building activities are an essential element in the progression towards other cooperative learning activities.

Students in early elementary grade classrooms must develop skills in following directions. “Parts of a Flower” (See Appendix E) focuses on communication between group members and the ability of group members to follow the teacher’s directions within the cooperative setting. Students also practice skills in cooperating, explaining, identifying, listening, counting, and language development. The leap frog Cooperative Learning approach is used in that once students are in groups of four, the first student goes to the teacher for directions. The student follows the first set of directions (includes getting specific supplies and passing them out to the group) and then relays the second set of direction to his/her group (which is the objective for the group). Once the objective is completed, the next student goes to the teacher for the next set of directions, and the process is repeated until all four students have completed their tasks as well as the group tasks. When the final product is finished, each student shares something aloud about the product – which is a spring mural.

One last cooperative learning activity I will discuss from Foyle (1991) is called “Sharing Teams” and it allows students to develop skills in sharing ideas, practicing roles, and listening skills. This activity has three to four members who rotate through the roles of sharer (tells the group his/her response to an idea), stretcher (asks questions to gain more information from the sharer), and the applauder (tells one or two things he/she like about what sharer and stretcher said). If group has four students, there can be two applauders. A time limit of 2-3 minutes should be given to each sharer, but with experience this time limit can be lengthened.

Writing can also be incorporated into the activity and roles can be reassigned for writer (writes the ideas of the group), teller (dictates to the writer), and checker (checks for completeness, grammar, punctuation, or other target writing skills class is focusing on). This activity can be adapted for preschool-kindergarten with the use of pairs. The pairs create a sentence that tells what the pair shared on that day and the sentence then goes on the “Share Pairs Chart”. Of course, this activity should be preceded by a pair/play time so the pairs will have experiences that their sentences will reflect. See Appendix (Appendix F) for possible “Sharing Team Starters” that are beginning statements that the student finishes. This structure allows students to build skills in oral language proficiency as well as listening. I’m sure the teacher could adapt this and use it so the partner reports out to the class about the other student and vice versa. This would build trust within the pair and be a whole group/community building activity as well (as diverse students learn about each other).

I would recommend *Cooperative Learning in the Early Childhood Classroom* for any educator who would like cooperative activities for K-3 grades. There are many activities outlined in the book, as well as the skills that each activity focuses on. I would also recommend *Designing Groupwork* if looking for cooperative learning activities for second to sixth grade students. Cohen describes the rationale for cooperative learning and an appendix of cooperative learning activities. Although I found several authors on cooperative learning, Johnson and Johnson seem to be the experts in the field and the literature I have from them on cooperative learning was very beneficial for my own understanding of the subject.

In conclusion, I have learned that cooperative learning groups require a progressive practice and learning of specific intellectual and social skills and abilities. Students cannot be placed in groups, assigned roles, and expected to complete the individual and group tasks without proper preparation and knowledge that is needed. If a teacher is well prepared, prepares the students accordingly, and engages the students in subject areas that are relevant, cooperative learning groups will aide the students in conceptual learning, higher order thinking skills, problem solving, and a range of communication skills that will all benefit the students across the curriculum.

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## Appendices

Appendix A: Table of Cooperative Learning Key Points

Appendices B-E: Lesson Ideas

Appendix F: Cooperative Team "Starters"

### Appendices

#### Appendix A

HETEROGENEOUS GROUPS "max mix"	Sense of identity Sense of acceptance/inclusion Sense of belonging to group
POSITIVE INTERDEPENDENCE "pulling together"	Trust building Child directed Motivation Learner responsibility
GROUP INTERACTION "Let's do it!"	Communication skills Social skills Problem solving/conflict resolution Active involvement
GROUP REWARD "We did it!"	Task completion/pride Bonding to group Motivation
INDIVIDUAL ACCOUNTABILITY "I did my part!"	Value to group/belonging Learner responsibility Individual progress check
SUCCESS "We did it WELL!"	Group processing/evaluation Planning/self-direction Motivation

Note. From Foyle, H. C. L., Lawrence; Thies, Sandra Alexander. (1991). *Cooperative learning in the early childhood classroom*: National Education Association of the United States.

## **Appendix B**

### **Help Dress the Person for Winter (Winter Clothing Activity)**

*Dorothy Hamilton*

*Objective:* Students will share materials promoting positive interdependence.

*Group Structure:* Partners.

#### *Procedure:*

1. The teacher shows the children a hat that is obviously used in warm weather (e.g., visor used in golf, large-brimmed sun hat). The children are asked to relate the uses of the hat and the materials from which it is made to the kind of weather in which it would be used.
2. A second hat—one that is heavy, is perhaps knitted, and pulls down over the ears—is compared and contrasted with the first hat.
3. Items of clothing that would be worn with the heavy winter hat are displayed by the teacher (e.g., boots, mittens, coat, scarf).
4. Each child is given one drawing of a winter hat that has a numeral on it. There are matching numerals on two drawings. Partners are formed as each child finds the person with the matching numeral.
5. Each set of partners is given one large sheet of paper (18" x 24") and one box of crayons. The children next
  - a. Draw one large picture of a person dressed warmly for winter.
  - b. Write the partners' names on the back of the paper.
6. The children are asked to bring their pictures to the large-group meeting place. The teacher collects the pictures. Each child is asked to tell the part(s) of the picture that his partner drew. Students are encouraged to name the parts by the kind of winter clothing that the partner drew.

#### *Comments:*

1. The cooperative drawing activity may be applied to any topic.
2. As children become more proficient in working with partners, the task can be done in groups of four. If groups of four work together, larger papers are usually needed. "Butcher" paper, which is often used for murals, can be used.
3. This activity is a good "group builder." If the teacher observes that one child dominates the activity, the teacher might want to build in the sharing of the drawing by using one of the following techniques:
  - a. Indicate a time to switch to the other partner by ringing a bell.
  - b. Assign selected crayon colors to each partner; only that partner may draw with those colors.
4. Intermittent use of this activity is one way to assess/evaluate the cooperative skills of young children.
5. At times when there is a large-group discussion, the Think-Pair-Share approach (Lyman 1981, 1987) may be used.

Note. From Foyle, H. C. L., Lawrence; Thies, Sandra Alexander. (1991). *Cooperative learning in the early childhood classroom*: National Education Association of the United States.

## Appendix C

### The Three Little Pigs

*Britt Vasquez*

#### Part 1

*Grade Level:* Preschool.

*Subject Area:* Language.

#### *Procedure:*

1. Select a lesson: “The Three Little Pigs.” Part 1 on concept/vocabulary readiness precedes Part 2.
2. Make the following decisions:
  - a. Group size: Pairs, then a large group of eight
  - b. Assignment to groups: Teacher assigns one more language proficient child as a buddy with one less language proficient child.
  - c. Room arrangement: First, children sit on carpeted area, then move to sit/stand next to their buddies around a round table.
  - d. Materials: Each pair will need a bucket. In each bucket is a baggie of straw, a baggie of sticks, a baggie with chunks of brick in it, a small toy pig, and a small toy wolf. (If toys cannot be obtained, use pictures.)
  - e. Assigning roles: Bucket Person—holds the bucket; Picker—takes items out of the bucket/puts items back into the bucket.
3. Set the lesson task: state the following in language your students understand.

Boys and girls, today we are going to learn some new words and use the words to play a game. You will work with a buddy. (Read the names of buddies and have them sit on the rug.) Hold your buddy’s hand up in the air so I can see who your buddy is. (Monitor.)

One of you will be the Bucket Person. The Bucket Person holds the bucket when I hand it out. What does the Bucket Person do? (Elicit response: *holds the bucket.*) One of you will be the Picker. The Picker takes items out of the bucket and puts items back into the bucket. What does the Picker do? (*Takes things out of the bucket and puts them back.*)

(Pass out the buckets)

Leave everything in the bucket. Watch me. I have something long and yellow and soft. (Show a handful of straw.) It’s called straw. Say “straw”. (Straw). Very good. What color is straw? (Yellow) What do you think straw is used for? (Elicit responses. *Straw is used to make beds for animals, and sometimes for people. Sometimes animals eat straw.*) What do you think happens to straw when you squish it with your hand? (*It mashes up.*) Pickers, in your bucket is a bag of straw. Take it out of the bucket. Open the bag, and you and your buddy touch the straw. Squish it and smell it. Do you think you’d like to eat it? (*No way!*) What do you think would happen if you made a house out of straw? (*It would fall down.*) Let’s put the straw back in the baggies and put the baggies back in the bucket. (Repeat the process for the sticks and for the bricks. Modify the process for the pig and the wolf as follows.) Have you ever seen a real pig? What color is it? How does it smell? What does it say? What does it eat? Does it wear clothes? Where does a pig live? (*In a barn or in a sty.*)

(Collect the buckets.)

You've learned some interesting words. (Hold up each item, one at a time.) Let's see what you've learned. What do we call this? (*Straw*. Repeat for each item.)

Let's play a game with these words. Hold your buddy's hand and walk to the game table....Now let's look at our game board. (See Figure 2.) You and your buddy will be a team. Each team gets to select a token. If you are the Bucket Person, you get to select the token. (Let each Bucket Person select a token and put it on "Go.") Your token is trying to get to the Brick House (at the end). But it can only move when it is your team's turn. When can you move your token? (*When it is our turn.*) To move you must draw a card and say the name of what is on the card. (The cards have pictures of straw, sticks, bricks, a pig, and a wolf on them.)

You may move three spaces each time one of your team can tell us what is on the card. (To ensure each child practices the words, have the children alternate, so that the person who did not give an answer during the previous round must give the answer this time.) It is all right for buddies to help/tell each other as long as the person whose turn it is actually says the word. If you cannot say the word, you can get help from the rest of the teams. If the other teams help you say the word, you may move two spaces. When you get to the Brick House, you may trade your token in for two stickers, one for you and one for you buddy.

While we play the game, you must take turns. What does take turns mean? (*First you, then me. Or is there are several children, first one, then the next, then the next, until it gets back to me so everyone gets a chance to play.*) Can we take turns today? (Play the game going round-robin around the table.)

- a. *Variation*: Have a game cloth on the floor. One of the buddies is the token and gets to move from space to space by jumping, hopping, or walking.
  - b. *Positive Interdependence*: Goal interdependence – Each one must say the new word in order to move the token. Buddies may help each other identify and say the correct word. Role interdependence – The Bucket Person holds the bucket, and the Picker removes and replaces items.
  - c. *Individual accountability*: Each person must take a turn saying the word.
  - d. *Criteria for success*: To be successful, each child must stay with her buddy, take turns, feel the new things in the bucket, and guess words during the game.
  - e. *Social behaviors expected*: Taking turns. First one, then the other. Or, if there are several children, first one, then the next, then the next, until it gets back to the first child, so everyone gets a chance to play.
4. Monitor and evaluate:
- a. *Evidence of expected behaviors (appropriate actions)*: The teacher will stay with the group of eight during the game time and monitor continuously.
  - b. *Observation form*: None.  
Observer: None
  - c. *Plans for evaluation/feedback*: When a team reaches the Brick House, the teacher will say, "Tell me about one time you and your buddy took turns."
5. Evaluate student outcomes:
- a. How well did students achieve their task?
  - b. How well did groups function?
  - c. How well did individual students function?

6. Evaluate lesson outcomes:
  - a. Task achievement
  - b. Group function
  - c. Notes on individuals
  - d. What went well?
  - e. What would you do differently next time?

Note. From Foyle, H. C. L., Lawrence; Thies, Sandra Alexander. (1991). *Cooperative learning in the early childhood classroom*: National Education Association of the United States.

## Appendix D

### Getting to Know You (Visual and Auditory Discrimination)

*Objective:* Working in pairs, students will respond accurately to spoken directions.

*Procedure:* Students will work together in pairs selected by the teacher. Their task is to listen carefully and do what the teacher says.

- A. Visual discrimination: Tell students to stand up if their partner is wearing
1. something red
  2. something blue
  3. something green
  4. something yellow
  5. shoes with white on them
  6. a shirt with a picture on it
  7. a shirt with buttons on it
  8. something in her hair
- B. Interaction: Tell students they will need to ask their partner to find out whether or not to stand up for each of the questions. Tell them to stand if their partner
1. has a dog
  2. has a cat
  3. has a brother
  4. has a sister
  5. had cereal for breakfast
  6. watched TV before school this morning
  7. walked to school this morning
  8. likes chocolate milk
  9. likes to play outside
  10. likes to come to school

*Group Evaluation:* The teacher can ask students to share one or more things they found out about their partner with the whole group.

Note. From Foyle, H. C. L., Lawrence; Thies, Sandra Alexander. (1991). *Cooperative learning in the early childhood classroom*: National Education Association of the United States.

## Appendix E

### Parts of a Flower (Spring)

Lori Skolnick

*Goal:* The children will follow directions, individually and as a group.

*Objective:* The children will work cooperatively and collaboratively, making a group spring mural by following specific teacher directions.

*Process Skills:* Cooperating, communicating, explaining, identifying, listening, and counting.

*Grouping:* Groups of four. The teacher makes cards prior to the lesson. On one side of the card is a number from 1 to 4, and on the other side of the card is a flower type. The numbers determine which team member performs each task.

*Procedure:* This lesson uses the leap frog Cooperative Learning approach.

Child 1 will go up to the teacher and obtain the first set of directions. The teacher states, "Give each person in your group a piece of paper and tell each one to cut out a stem for a flower."

The child gets materials and takes them to the group. The child then relays the teacher's directions to the group, and the group members follow the child's directions.

The teacher monitors all groups and checks on their progress. When the majority of the children have completed the task, the teacher calls up child 2 and states the following, "Go and get two leaves for each person in your group and have them cut them out." Child 2 gets the materials and relays the directions to the group.

Child 3 is called by the teacher. The teacher states, "Get enough flowers for each member of your group. Ask your friends what color each one would like." The teacher pauses to allow child 3 to complete this set of directions before giving the next set of directions to child 3. The teacher tells child 3, "Tell your team members that they are to glue their flowers onto their stems." Child 3 relays the directions to the group.

Child 4 is called by the teacher. The teacher states, "Have your group glue their flowers on the paper—first, the flower with the stem and, second, the leaves." Child 4 gets the background paper and relays the directions to the group.

Child 1 is called by the teacher. The teacher states, "Ask your group whether or not they would like to add anything else to their beautiful picture." Child 1 carries the directions to the group. If the group decides to add something, then child 2 can be in charge of getting any additional materials that are needed.

Cleaning up of the materials and returning them to the correct location are the tasks of children 3 and 4. Once the area is cleaned up, each group shares its mural with the class. With a prekindergarten class or a kindergarten class with a high percentage of non-English-speaking children, each child from the group should say something about the mural.

Note. From Foyle, H. C. L., Lawrence; Thies, Sandra Alexander. (1991). *Cooperative learning in the early childhood classroom*: National Education Association of the United States.

## Appendix F

### Sharing Team Starters

1. What I like to do best is...
2. What I like about school is...
3. School could be better if...
4. Something really fun I did was...
5. Things I like to see (hear, taste, feel, smell) are...
6. Something that makes me happy is...
7. My favorite food is...
8. A good friend is...
9. Hot weather (cold, snow, rain) makes me feel like...  
(Negatives may be introduced after trust has been built in the classroom.  
Some negative statements might include the following.)
10. Something that bugs me is...
11. Something that scares me is...
12. Something that makes me angry is...

Note. From Foyle, H. C. L., Lawrence; Thies, Sandra Alexander. (1991). *Cooperative learning in the early childhood classroom*: National Education Association of the United States.

## Strategies for Supporting Students Independent Work

Chelsea Hull

### Introduction

In this paper, I use the term independent work. I prefer this term because it includes any kind of assignments that are completed outside of school. This could mean small, daily homework assignments, larger weekly assignments such as essays, and includes long-term independent projects. I believe that all work completed outside of school is inherently related, so using an all encompassing term is one way to connect assignments of all sizes and find strategies that support students for any type of independent work.

As a high school student I did a great deal of independent work. Almost all my assignments were completed at home or at school during independent work time. I learned to manage my time in a way that worked for me, and I felt that this method of learning allowed me freedom and creativity within my assignments. However, as a teacher I found less success when assigning independent work with my own students. When I asked my students to complete and turn in assignments like essays, worksheets, and unfinished class work, the turn-in rates were very low (50-60%). Whenever I assigned work in class, students seemed interested, completed the work, and then turned it in on time. What was the difference between in-class work and at-home work? What was I doing wrong? How can I improve homework turn-in rates and student success with independent work in my classroom? This project has become a way for me to explore my own mistakes in the classroom and a way for me to find strategies that better support students' independent work.

To learn more about this topic, I felt it was important to look at research in books as well as get information first-hand from educators who successfully implement independent work in their own classrooms. These educators include my colleagues from the MIT 2006-2008 cohort, an Evergreen academic dean and former public school teacher, a college professor, and a high school teacher. Along with my research, these four fantastic sources of information gave me new insight into ways that I can improve my implementation of supportive strategies when assigning independent work to my students.

Within the topic of independent work, there are two main areas of focus: homework and independent projects. Both of these types of independent work are assigned at the high school and college levels and both can have great value as learning tools. While *not* assigning either of these types of work is always an option for educators, this paper will focus mostly on the reasons for assigning independent work and the best supportive strategies for success when assigning homework and independent projects.

### What is Homework?

We have all heard about homework. Most of us have done it at some point. According to Marzano, homework provides “students with opportunities to deepen their understanding and skills relative to content that has been initially provided to them” (2001, p.60). There are three main types of homework assigned, homework for practice, preparation, or elaboration. The three types of homework are named for their purposes, which should always be explained to students. All three types have value for educators.

Homework for practice is probably the most familiar type. This type of homework is commonly used to “provide students an opportunity to reinforce newly acquired skills or apply recent learnings” (LaConte and Doyle, 1986, p. 9). There are some troubles with practice homework. Often, educators assign practice homework to students who are not ready to work on the content or skill on their own. Practice homework should always be based on content that has already been introduced and the student has sufficient grasp of the content or skill to practice it on their own, successfully (Marzano, 2001). Another problem with practice homework is that it fails to take into account the ability level of individual students. Sometimes called “blanket” practice homework, assignments that are given to the entire class regardless of each student’s skill levels run the risk of boring children who need more challenging work and frustrating those who have not grasped the content or skill being practiced. The most effective type of practice homework is individualized, based on setting practice goals that reflect the needs of each student (LaConte and Doyle, 1986, England and Flatley, 1985).

An example of this type of homework in a social studies classroom could be a teacher who assigns multi-level worksheets instead of one worksheet for the whole class. Depending on the previous knowledge base of the student, a teacher could create multiple worksheets that address the same concepts but at differing levels of challenge and complexity. Students who are very familiar with the concepts could answer questions that delve deeper into the topic, while lower-level worksheet questions could focus more on reinforcing basic understanding of the concepts. All students would return to class with increased knowledge of the subject being studied, but at differentiated levels. Another example of practice homework could be with a math assignment. If students are practicing math at home, a teacher could assign varying amounts and difficulty levels to students who need to be challenged or need some extra practice with the basics. The key here is that teachers are differentiating practice homework so that students do not become bored because it is too easy or frustrated because the homework is too hard.

The second most common type of homework assigned is called preparation homework. Preparation is used to prepare students for upcoming content or skills. Often teachers use preparation homework to increase background knowledge of the learning, to create curiosity about class work, to get students thinking about their own personal relationship to content, or to learn about students previous experiences with the content or skill area prior to the actual teaching. Some problems with preparation homework are that teachers often overestimate the amount of preparation that is needed or that their students are capable of, or they assign preparation homework without giving a rationale. Students who are required to spend a large amount of time doing something they see no value in will rarely take part in this type of homework. When assigning preparation homework, educators should keep in mind two things: this type of homework is to give a background on a topic, not mastery, and that preparation homework should always be carefully explained so that students are aware of the purpose (Marzano, 2001, LaConte and Doyle, 1986, England and Flatley, 1985).

An example of preparation homework in a social studies class could be asking students to complete a questionnaire about their ethnic or cultural background in preparation for a unit on the same topic. Another example could be an English teacher who wants to get a sense of their students’ experience with the skill of comparing and contrasting in writing. One option could be to have students to write a paragraph about how they are the same or different from another member of their family. Like this last example, often preparation homework is the same as an at-home pre-assessment, a way to gauge whether or not students have had experience with a certain content area or skill without having to take up class time to assess this.

The third type of homework is called elaboration or extension homework. Elaboration or extension homework comes after the introduction of content or skills in class and is a way to let students explore aspects of the content in ways that are meaningful to them. The goal of elaboration or extension homework is to “foster student initiative for learning by allowing a great deal of student choice in expanding on the learning begun in class. Extension homework is often built around problems, either student-identified or teacher identified, that enable the student to both apply previous learnings and to reach out to new understanding” (LaConte and Doyle, 1986, p. 12). Sometimes elaboration or extension homework can become long-term and very elaborate and are similar to or the same as an independent project.

Providing timely feedback is an essential part of all types of homework. Some teachers forget this important step when assigning homework. When students know that homework will not be graded or commented on, they often will not turn it in. Grading and returning homework lets educators and students know which content areas have been mastered and which areas they still need to work on. Further, homework that *is* graded or commented on significantly increases the academic effectiveness of the homework (Marzano, 2001).

### **What Do Educators Say About Homework?**

The educators interviewed for this paper held a wealth of knowledge on the topic of homework. The three formal interviewees, David Marr, Rita Pougiales, and Lester Krupp all stated that they have assigned some form of homework in their time of teaching and they see value in the assigning of homework. Lester said that while homework might be good for reasons that are conventionally commented on (such as preparation for college), his main reason for assigning it is because “the time together in class is simply not enough time to do what I think we can do, and therefore we ought to try to do it.” He also points out that assigning homework “makes the work of the class part of their whole life instead of just part of the circumscribed 55 minutes” (C. Hull, personal interview, February 19). (Strategies: high expectations of students’ abilities, relating homework to students’ lives)

Both Rita Pougiales and David Marr stressed that homework must not be “busy work.” Homework should always involve meaning-making and the busy work diminishes the meaning involved in learning (C. Hull, personal interviews, January 31, 2008, February 13, 2008). Rita commented that a great strategy for creating student buy-in would be to allow students to “come up with things *they* see as a challenge,” instead of always assuming that you as the educator know exactly the best way to challenge each student. Rita also shared that she thought students would have more success with homework if educators regularly asked for feedback about the level of meaning that students’ found in the work. (Strategies: creating student buy-in through personal choice, allowing students to create own meaning, ask for student feedback on quality of assigned homework, don’t use “busy work”)

Lester Krupp said that he differentiates his type and level of homework depending on the ability levels in his classes. He shared his homework strategies with two classes he is teaching currently, a class for students who have failed the reading and writing WASL and compared that class with another, higher-level English class. In the first class, understanding that the students, for whatever reason, may be unable to complete homework assignments, he assigned very little to no homework. Instead of homework, the students practice writing in journals and are given time to complete assignments in class. In the second class, Lester gives out a packet containing at least 25 options for elaboration-type homework assignments that allow students to delve deeper into topics related to class work. Each assignment or project is worth a certain amount of points,

and points usually correlate with the amount of work/time that each project takes compared to the others. Projects include perusing and writing a summary of a particular website, reading articles, looking up specific people, or any other idea that students come up with and clear with him. Students are free to choose whichever assignments they wish and complete them within the allotted time (usually every two or three weeks). At every designated due date, a certain amount of points are due, and students may choose any configuration of projects to meet the required points for that due date (C. Hull, personal interview, February 19). (Strategies: No homework assigned, allowing class time to complete homework, creating buy-in by offering creative homework options, regular homework schedule, clear due dates, allowing for student input)

Following the interviews, a survey was given to the Evergreen State College's MIT 2006-2008 student cohort. The cohort was asked to list strategies that they had or would use to support students' success with homework. The responses echoed the strategies that Rita, David and Lester mentioned, and added many other ideas as well (see appendix A for the full fabulous list).

### **What Are Independent Projects?**

Independent projects, sometimes referred to as independent study projects, independent contracts, or individual student contracts, are usually long-term, student-centered assignments. Patricia Wee describes an independent project as "a concentrated, in-depth study of a self-selected topic that falls outside the normal curriculum" (2000, p.1). When independent projects are implemented well, they can be an exciting and successful way for students to gain very deep understanding about a topic of their choice. (Wee, 2000, Kent, 2000) Independent projects allow for more freedom of choice than typical classroom assignments. Students who are permitted to use the independent project model can show wider ranges of abilities than conventional assignments allow for. In addition, students who work on these long-term projects gain a sense of investment, pride, and ownership in the work they create (Wee, 2000).

Often the independent project model is applied in senior or graduation projects, career exploration projects, and other large culminating projects used in high school and middle school. Most educators use independent projects only in courses that were designed around them such as graduation, senior project, or career development classes. This is because effectively implementing independent projects takes a great deal of time and careful relationship-building with students. Despite the challenge, educators at the college level and in other content areas around the country do choose to implement independent projects in their classes because of the range of benefits discussed above.

No matter what kind of course an educator is teaching, in order to find out what kind of topic fits a student, educators must spend time getting to know and listening to, each individual student (Kent, 2000). In large classes, this can be a daunting task. Wee (2001, p. 9-10) reports that educators must be willing to take on the following responsibilities for students and their projects to help guarantee success:

- Ensure that the project is within the students capabilities
- Suggest possible resources
- Determine that projects are appropriate, manageable, and realistic in time and scope
- Explain the specific components of the project such as the written proposal, the oral presentation, and the self-evaluation
- Supervise deadlines
- Review the various components
- Suggest improvements

- Assist with the formation of the evaluation criteria
- Cheerlead on tough days
- Aid the student in arranging the presentation
- Evaluate the project in its entirety, which may include the proposal, self-evaluation, and final or end product, and the oral presentation

A key aspect of implementing independent projects in any classroom is the pre-project planning. Both the educator and the student must take plenty of time to carefully plan the structure, expectations, check-in times, and due dates for the parts of the project and the project as a whole. Preparing worksheets to help students narrow or broaden their topics, set check in times and days, help to create or organize a presentation format, and a way to self-reflect on the work of the project is an essential job of the educator who wishes to implement independent projects (Wee, 2001).

There are many ways to use independent projects to enhance a curriculum. For example, in a social studies class, after a general overview of content material, students could each choose a topic that interests them to study in-depth. In a U.S. history class, each student could choose a decade or particular era of U.S. history for their topic of study and eventually report back to the class in a variety of forms. A project like this would allow for student choice, which increases motivation, as well as making the learning more student-centered.

### **What Do Educators Say About Independent Projects?**

Both Rita Pougiales and David Marr commented on their use and endorsement of independent projects. Independent projects allow for huge amounts of student choice, deep motivation, profound connection with material, and tap into students natural desires to explore personal topics and connect them to the surrounding world. (C. Hull, personal interviews, January 31, 2008, February 13, 2008). Rita commented that independent projects are a very valuable form of learning and should be used in all grade levels to “build skills in the younger grades,” as well as create “enormous personal discipline for students” (C. Hull, personal interview, February 13, 2008).

Independent projects are used frequently at the college level. David Marr often sponsors individual learning contracts with students and sometimes teaches a whole program of students who are all working on independent projects. He uses this model because it allows for the most amount of choice of topics that spark the interest of students. He believes that independent projects work “from the inside out,” meaning that the project is student originated, not teacher originated. His students begin their projects by coming to him and sharing possible topics. He works with the student to get to the root of the interest. For example, he says that if a student comes in and says “I want to study Shakespeare,” David searches for the root of that interest. He asks, “Why do you want to study Shakespeare?” “What I’m fishing for is what makes the student tick. I want to know what really gets under his skin. Because I want to use that, whatever the heck it is, as a basis for getting the motivation going.” This use of questioning allows the student to begin to focus his learning. David is often tempted to guide his students’ projects by turning them one direction or another, but cautions that this is not the teacher’s work, it is the students’ work. If you want to hold students accountable for their work, and keep them motivated, it must be their own. (Strategies: Relationship-building, creating buy-in through student choice of topic, increasing motivation through deep curiosity, student-centered learning)

After David helps students choose a topic, he creates a schedule of meetings, usually once a week, to check in with the student about their progress and learning. At each weekly meeting, David requires students to bring in a piece of writing that they have completed. They look it over together and discuss the student's learning for that week. David explains about this part of the independent project process,

It can't just be writing that they do at home and put in a notebook or their files and keep it to themselves. We have to look at it together because unless and until they can put down thoughts about their work in writing and we can look at them I don't think I've done my job. And I know they haven't done theirs. So we do that together, and that's the structure, its kind of a regular tutorial session. And that's what I do. I pay attention to, I try my best, to pay attention to how they're thinking about this project, how they're actually conceptualizing and re-conceptualizing and re-conceptualizing what it is they have to say about the subject.

Overall, David feels that his students are successful in their learning endeavors. He said that sometimes students end up learning something that they had not expected, or the quality or depth of the work does not reflect their own hopes for the project. But no matter what, independent projects are successful because students learn a great deal about a subject they were curious about. Teacher support during independent projects is key. This can be seen in David's account of his role in deepening a student's understanding. Although he is a college professor, teachers at all levels must be willing to commit to a strong supportive role for students who are working on independent projects (C. Hull, personal interview, January 31, 2008). (Strategies: Structured check-in times, specific expectations of what materials due, increase student thinking/learning through questioning)

Educators can also use the other students in the class to help support each other, or even complete group-oriented projects. Rita explained, "Independent work doesn't always mean they have to work alone," "individual work could be built into group work," and in this way some of the work of the educator could be maintained by the students (C. Hull, personal interview, February 13, 2008). Either way, educators must be able to carefully plan and support students or groups of students as they take on the work of an independent project. (Strategies: build in peer-to-peer accountability or group work, set project structure ahead of time, careful implementation of plans)

### **What Are Some Examples Of Strategies And Assignments That I Will Use In The Future To Better Support Independent Work In My Classroom?**

Looking back on my troubles with independent work, I can see that there are many strategies that I could, and should, have been using to support my students' work outside of class. While my in-class work was usually well planned, clearly connected to the content area, and engaging, perhaps my independent assignments lacked some of these qualities. I also could have allowed more class time to complete independent assignments, more time at home, or had more flexible deadlines for turning in work. I can say for sure that I put less thought and planning into my independent assignments than I did my in-class work. In the future, I think I will make sure to put as much or more thought into independent assignments because I now

know that these are the assignments students will opt out of if they are not properly engaged in them.

The educators interviewed for this project, and the survey completed by the MIT cohort provided many strategies that I think would have improved my turn-in rates and made my teaching more successful. Specifically, I will consider using homework less, and make sure the assignments I assign are much more meaningful. I also plan to assign independent work that allows for student choice, like Lester's homework options. I also have a strong desire to use independent projects along with, or instead of, typical social studies curriculum. This is something that I would do a bit later in my teaching, when I am sure I can give students the kind of support necessary for this type of student-centered work. Overall, this project has opened my eyes to a myriad of successful strategies for implementing independent work in my classrooms.

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## **Appendix A: MIT 2006-2008 Strategies for Success with Homework**

### **MIT 2006-2008 Strategies for Success with Homework:**

- Don't assign homework, do all work in class
- Assign homework less often
- Allow time to begin/work on homework in class
- Don't make homework too difficult
- Choose assignments that support work in class and students can be successful with
- Make sure homework is meaningful/Don't assign "busy work" for homework
- Relate homework to students' lives
- Assign homework that is an important part of the following day's agenda
- Make instructions and expectations clear
- Communicate expectations with students and parents
- Set a time limit for homework, let students know how long you expect them to be working (20 min.)
- Create "buy-in" for doing and returning homework
- Make due dates clear/have real deadlines
- Use reminders
- Allow students to turn in late work/have flexible deadlines
- Accept early homework completion
- Have a predictable homework schedule: give homework on Mondays and have it due on Fridays
- Not assign homework on Fridays or before long breaks
- Have students keep track by writing down assignments in a schedule book or calendar
- Use homework folders
- Have a specific way or place to turn in homework
- Correct homework and return it to students quickly
- Don't hold the threat of grading over homework
- Have one-on-one meetings with students who are missing work
- Tell students that they can always come in for help
- Have "catch-up time" once or twice a week to allow students to complete homework
- Focus on projects/units instead of compartmentalized tasks
- Use weekly progress reports
- Involve parents in homework through newsletters or other forms of communication

## Grammar for Social Justice: Empowering Linguistically Marginalized Students Through Standard English

Jennifer Kamrar

*The weight of the world  
is love. □*

*Under the burden  
of solitude,  
under the burden  
of dissatisfaction*

*the weight,  
the weight we  
carry is love.*

--Allen Ginsberg, "Song"

### A Need for Change

I begin writing from a place of love. I begin here because I believe that writing must come from love, from passion; for writing that is not linked to the tendons, the sinews, the visceral fire of the writer is but merely air, paper, waste. And so, as teachers, as co-learners, and as individuals working for social change in public schools, we must begin to light anew the passion for writing, creating, and connecting through language in our students; it is, however, ourselves where this work begins.

I write this paper with the strong belief that writing can change the individual and society. I believe that by its very intimate nature, the power of writing, when opened to fiery realities of oppression, can begin to make change. I, as a white middle-class female of U.S. citizenship, have gleaned many privileges in this society on account of my ethnic and cultural background's similarity with the dominant culture of the United States. Because of this, my schooling – though both challenging and upsetting at times – was, in fact, designed for me in its language, its culture, and its socio-cultural expectations. This is not the reality of the majority of public school students in the U.S. Instead of being welcomed to a school that reflects the culture, diversity, and language of many students (particularly in the case of students of color and low-income students), these same schools (the same ones roughly designed for students like me) continue to elevate and perpetuate the cultural capital of white, standard English-speaking, capitalistic, patriarchal, middle-class homogeneity, dominance, and oppression.

I am going into the profession of teaching, and also the writing of this piece, to try to work against the dominant powers that exist in our public schools, to try to “un-teach” what has been taught to historically marginalized peoples in U.S. public schools for decades. For the purpose of the piece, I have reread the cornerstone text of Standard English, Strunk & White's Elements of Style side by side with radical articles and voices from Rethinking Schools magazine. To blend the opposite voices, I have been perhaps most greatly influenced by the work and writings of Vicki Vinton and Mary Ehrenworth with their both dense *and* accessible text, *The Power of Grammar*. Throughout my writing I am trying to reverse the mantras that the

historically marginalized students we teach “Will never succeed,” “Are failures,” and/or to change the belief that these students are simply an easy opportunity for young white female teachers to feel charitable for a few years a la *Dangerous Minds or Freedom Writers*. No. Instead, I both write from, and teach from, and work for the ideal of solidarity with my students. I write from and teach from the belief that all students are capable, all students are gifted, and all students have the power to make change in the world, even if it is a world heavily bogged in oppression of many variant natures.

It is thusly that I introduce the more specific nature of this paper, that of teaching standard white English to historically linguistically marginalized students in public schools to empower, not homogenize, the voices of these students. Language is a gatekeeper, and as Lisa Delpit writes, “There are codes or rules for participating in power; that is, there is a ‘culture of power’,” (Ehrenworth & Vinton, 2005, p. 4) and in the U.S. it is undeniable that though much of this power is accrued through economic status, one’s fluency in dominant culture may only be second to money. If we are to give our students access to power in society, we must give them the tools of, and fluency in, this society’s language of power: Standard English.

When speaking of societal power and empowering our students through the use of dominant culture’s language, I wish to imply my encouragement towards using this “power” for the perpetuation of social justice, anti-bias education, and community-centered social change for my students, instead of “power” through monetary affluence and continued capitalistic class hierarchy and hegemony. On the other hand, I realize and respect the interests that my students choose to pursue, and as a teacher I will stand back to allow them autonomy in their studies and lives, to function personally as a gate-opener and guide.

In speaking of non-standard English, I believe that any variant of English spoken among a particular group of people – “Spanglish,” Ebonics, Southern U.S. dialects, etc. – are not only valid but necessary and important in the transmittance of culture, values, and community amongst those whom participate in the particular language; this is also true of non-English languages that are spoken in the homes and communities of the students we teach. I also believe that to truly empower our students through writing, and thusly thinking, and furthermore communicating in general, our students need to be equipped with the tools of dominant culture without assimilating to dominant culture. In other words, our students need to know their own languages and dialects, and yet still be powerfully fluent in Standard English to truly effect change where change needs to occur while also having access to gates that have been previously closed to them based on historic linguistic oppression and this lineage or systematic racism and classism. Essentially, our students need to be talented code-switchers.

When starting to teach grammar and Standard English, and perhaps when starting to teach students anything in general, it may be important to preface our work with questions that will help lay a foundation for the importance of our studies. In *The Power of Grammar*, Mary Ehrenworth and Vicki Vinton propose to base such teaching of grammar for social justice off of three main questions: “Who has power? How is it held? How does it shift?” (p. 5) When we can begin to identify the answers to these questions with our students, perhaps through many means (journal entries, daily entry tasks, small group and whole class discussion), we begin to give more meaning to our study. When both teacher as co-learner and students as co-learners come together to identify such societal power-holdings, they begin to add texture, meaning, and purpose to the study of language and their own schooling. Through the explicit study of institutional racism and classism in relation to language (amongst other forms of oppression), we can begin to examine the powers that our students are up against while fueling the passion for

their learning through making change to the existing structure of both schooling and this whiter than white capitalistic patriarchy that we all live within here in the United States.

### **Practical Recommendations**

Traditional grammar and English instruction have obviously not worked, as a whole, for the multitudes of historically underserved peoples in U.S. public schools. As I have hopefully now laid groundwork for why grammar and Standard English have everything to do with student empowerment and social justice, there now remains question as to how we relate to these learning concepts as well as how we will actually teach them. Grammar instruction, much like other areas of traditional study in public schools, needs to be rethought and radically altered in both the *ways* and *whys* of its teaching. It is here, however, where it becomes difficult to equip our students with the linguistic skills they need to codeswitch and change status quo social power, while taking care to not reduplicate assimilationist language instruction.

In making all education more holistic, language instruction and grammar included, we can look to the teaching and encouragement of writing as a means to this end. Many educators and education researchers are supportive of writing across the curriculum. If we think of writing as a means to thinking, that when we are learning to write we are actually learning a new way of thinking, writing and grammar then become intrinsic to all areas of study and relevant to all teachers. If proper grammar and the importance of such is supported across the curriculum then our students' efforts to learn and grow linguistically will perhaps be easier if done in this more holistic way.

### **Mini-Lessons**

Lisa Delpit writes about linguistically oppressed students' knowledge of grammar rules saying that, "unless one has the leisure of a lifetime of 'immersion' to learn them, explicit presentation makes learning immeasurably easier." (p. 18). So while we need to support proper grammar across the curriculum – and especially in the Language Arts classroom – we also need to make these rules in grammar instruction clear and overt. We can begin to do this by combining mini grammar lessons with our general writing and language arts instructional practices. Instead of traditional "drill and kill" grammar teaching strategies, using mini-lessons alongside our general instructional practices – which are hopefully culturally relevant and social justice-minded to begin with – will then allow our students to make sense of sometimes confusing grammar rules.

Mini-lessons work by explicitly focusing on one small area of grammar study at a time, making grammar and Standard English make sense in small, digestible pieces. When we make grammar and Standard English accessible to all students, as well as relevant to their lives, we are far less likely to lose our students' interest, investment, and internalized learning. Retention of grammar and Standard English rules, along with students' ability to communicate and linguistically codeswitch, will then work to empower students with the knowledge that they will have greater access, if *they* so *choose*, to "higher" circles of societal power, if we teach properly.

In our grammar and language instruction we must remember that while we are stressing the language rules of dominant culture to make change, we also stress the validity and importance of the diverse linguistic traditions of our students. As teachers we carry a great amount of power and influence in our classrooms; in our reflections on teaching, we must continually recognize that this power we hold can work for the betterment or detriment of our students. As discussed earlier, to nullify the importance of our students' home language, or to

shame a student's use of non-standard English in the pursuit of Standard English learning only continues a disservice to linguistically marginalized students.

### **Engagement, Focus, and Evaluation**

When we speak of being relevant to a student's life and culture, we speak not only of being aware of bias in the classroom, but also of a critically conscious-based curriculum, one in which students are engaged with the examination of the self and greater world. Teaching grammar and Standard English is no different on this account. When teaching grammar through mini-lessons and then applying the specific lessons to meaningful writing it is important to know what particular subjects and prompts will birth meaningful student responses.

In suggesting particularly compelling prompts for students, a teacher may want to focus on crafting personal prompts on the following suggestions from Ehrenworth & Vinton:

- stories of childhood
- narratives of desire and temptation
- stories about the urge to belong
- moments of choice (p. 45)

Further, there are specific places that also get at the pith of students' lives and life experiences; prompts asking students to include such places in their writing often lead to depth, feeling, and investment. Such places where Ehrenworth & Vinton experienced success having their students write about included:

- the cafeteria
- the gym
- recess
- after school play
- lockers
- hallways
- friendship circles
- family relations and expectations
- clothes (p. 45)

Once a student is invested in their own writing, it is easy to take learning from the mini-lessons on grammar and language and apply these to responses in which the students are engaged in their stories, writing, and selves. When read for a final response (or in many traditional cases, a final grade), students can be told that the teacher will be reading with specific attention to grammar following the "X" number of mini-lessons taught during a particular unit. Students can self-edit and peer-edit for both content and grammar before turning in final drafts and upon the return of these final "graded" drafts, the expectations surrounding grammar will be very explicit. This helps the students while also helping the teacher. Instead of getting a paper back in which a red pen has slashed through and corrected every grammar mistake, only particular pieces of grammar are corrected. This has everything to do with making grammar as accessible as possible to the student, and meanwhile, provides less editing work on part of the teacher who may be reading 150 written responses.

## Closing

I believe in the power of language, of communication, and of individuals standing up for truth and freedom through many means – especially linguistic. In this case, it is good that I have written this paper and better yet, that I will be an English teacher. One quite profound caveat I came across in all my studies is a quote from an article, again by perhaps one of my most favorite author's on the subject of social justice-infused education, Lisa Delpit. She writes:

Keep in mind a simple truth: Despite our necessary efforts to provide access to standard English, such access will not make any of our students more intelligent. It will not teach them math or science or geography -- or, for that matter, compassion, courage, or responsibility. Let us not become so overly concerned with the language form that we ignore academic and moral content. Access to the standard language may be necessary, but it is definitely not sufficient to produce intelligent, competent caretakers of the future.

(Delpit, 1997).

So while I strongly promote writing across the curriculum with an emphasis on culturally relevant teaching of grammar and Standard English for the purpose of empowering students who have been historically enfranchised, marginalized, and inferiorized by dominant white culture, I also see our duties as teachers to be midwives to the learning of our students, to take care of, and tend to the heads *and* hearts of our students. As teachers, we are already a part of the futures we wont physically be able to touch in our lifetimes, but as influences in the lives of students who ebb and flow from our classrooms our capacity to effect change and empower youth is infinite.

*“If you don't respect the children's culture, you negate their very essence.”*

-- Carrie Secret, teacher, Oakland Unified School District

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## **Appendices**

Appendix A: The Standard English Quick Reference Cheat Sheet: Common Grammar and Spelling Mistakes

Appendix B: Academic Calendar for Introduction of Grammar Basics

## Appendix A

### The Standard English Quick Reference Cheat Sheet: Common Grammar and Spelling Mistakes

CONVERSIONS	WHY?
<p>“u” becomes “you”</p> <p><i>An example:</i></p> <p>“<u>U</u> are an amazing writer.” becomes “<u>You</u> are an amazing writer.”</p>	<p>We have to spell out our words in Standard English form and differentiate them from text messaging. To help you remember, here’s a question to ask yourself: <b>Could I write this way on an application (for college or a job)?</b></p>
<p>“I <u>don’t got no</u> time to waste.” becomes “I <u>don’t have any</u> time to waste.”</p>	<p>Remember when you double negate in <i>Standard English</i>, it is not only improper but the statement would then technically turn into a positive.</p>
<p>“We <u>be</u> working really hard.” becomes “We <u>are</u> working really hard.”</p>	<p>When writing or speaking Standard English, we have to remember to make our subject and verb agree. In the first example here, “We” and “be” is not in agreement. We have to properly conjugate our verbs depending on the pronouns we use. In this, “We be” changes to the proper S.E. translation as “We are.”</p>
<p>“<u>Its</u> cool to be involved in your community.” becomes “<u>It’s</u> cool to be involved in your community”</p>	<p>This is a tricky rule for a lot of people. Remember we use “its” to refer to possession, such as, “That book? Yes, its hers.” When we use, “it’s” it is to replace “it is.” If we think of the apostrophe as taking the place of the second ‘I’ in “it is,” <i>it’s</i> easier to remember.</p>
<p>:) becomes ____</p>	<p>Smiley faces should <b>never</b> be used outside of your personal e-mails and text messages. Never put these in your essays, applications, or anything related to your professional or academic work. This is when it is important to think of the audience you are writing to and the genre you are choosing to use for this purpose. If you want to infuse your writing with the feel of a smile or humor, do so in your writing not in symbols.</p>
<p>“<u>Your</u> a very inspiring friend.” becomes “<u>You’re a</u> very inspiring friend.”</p>	<p>Similar to the problems people have with the difference between ‘its’ and ‘it’s’, the remedy for this problem is also similar. Think of the ‘you’re’ as a shorter way of saying ‘you are,’ and the apostrophe simply takes the place the ‘a.’ Remember that when you say ‘your’ it implies a belonging to or possession of, such as: “Your mom is a strong woman.” It wouldn’t make sense to write “You’re mom is a strong woman,” when we translate that sentence as meaning “You are mom is a strong woman.</p>

*J. Kamrar, MIT Winter 2008, Grammar for Social Justice: Empowering Linguistically Marginalized Students through Standard English Instruction*

## Appendix B

### Academic Calendar for Introduction of Grammar Basics

Grammar basics listed below are to be taught, incorporated in general instruction, and assessed through the implementation of mini-lessons throughout the year. This calendar is adapted by J. Kamrar from Ehrenworth and Vinton, p. 44-45, 2005.

<i>September</i>	October	November	(Dec. - Finals) January	February	March	April	May (June – Finals)
<p><b>Week One:</b> Set up instruction are the three main questions: <b>Who has power?</b> <b>How is it held?</b> <b>How does it shift?</b></p>	<p><b>Week One:</b> PARAGRAPHING. Students will revisit and incorporate a more refined approach the paragraphing of their writing.</p>	<p><b>Week One:</b> PARAGRAPHING revisited. Students should now be building “proper” paragraph structures.</p>	<p><b>Week One:</b> SUBJECT &amp; OBJECT. Students examine subject and object use in the proper forms of pronouns and who/whom.</p>	<p><b>Week One:</b> SUBJECT &amp; OBJECT. Writers try to use the proper forms of pronouns as well as when to use who/whom in the writing of their drafts.</p>	<p><b>Week One:</b> SUBJECT AND OBJECT. Writers try to use proper forms of pronouns and who/whom as they write.</p>	<p><b>Week One:</b> COMMAS &amp; CONJUNCTIONS. Writers learn how to write longer sentences by joining complete sentences with a comma and a conjunction</p>	<p><b>Week One:</b> COMMAS &amp; CONJUNCTIONS. Writers learn to write longer sentences by joining complete sentences with a comma and conjunction.</p>

<p><b>Week Two:</b> ENDING PUNCTUATION. Students will make choices about punctuation endings in their revision strategies.</p>	<p><b>Week Two:</b> ENDING PUNCTUATION. Students will now incorporate refined ending punctuation in their writing.</p>	<p><b>Week Two:</b> SUBJECT AND PREDICATE revisited. Student write complete sentences with proper subject and predicate incorporated into their writing.</p>	<p><b>Week Two:</b> SUBJECT &amp; PREDICATE. Writers now are fluent in the construction of complete sentences when writing prose.</p>	<p><b>Week Two:</b> VERB TENSE. Students make decisions about verb tense as they write drafts</p>	<p><b>Week Two:</b> VERB TENSE. Writers make choices about verb tense as they draft and they try to maintain verb endings consistent with their verb choice.</p>	<p><b>Week Two:</b> VERB TENSE. Writers make choices about verb tense as they write and they strive to use verb endings and form consistent with their choice.</p>	<p><b>Week Two:</b> APOSTROPHES. Writers study how apostrophes signify possessive forms and contractions and we revise our writing to use these forms to convey meaning.</p>
<p><b>Week Three:</b> PARAGRAPHING. Students will learn to break their writing into smaller chunks and be able to answer the question, “What constitutes a paragraph?”</p>	<p><b>Week Three:</b> SUBJECT AND PREDICATE. Students will compose sentences by including a subject and predicate and revise writing to include these syntactical strategies.</p>	<p><b>Week Three:</b> FRAGMENTS revisited. Students look at different types of writing genres and make decisions about fragments in their own writing.</p>	<p><b>Week Three:</b> FRAGMENTS. Writers can and do use fragments purposefully. We examine how this works in sophisticated examples.</p>	<p><b>Week Three:</b> PUNCTUATING DIALOGUE. Writers learn to punctuate dialogue properly and look over old drafts revising for proper dialogue punctuation.</p>	<p><b>Week Three:</b> PUNCTUATING DIALOGUE. Writers learn the basics of proper dialogue punctuation and do so while in the drafting stages.</p>	<p><b>Week Three:</b> PUNCTUATING DIALOGUE revisited. Students should not have mastered or being their way to mastering the skill of dialogue punctuation.</p>	<p><b>Week Three:</b> SEMICOLON &amp; COLONS. Writers learn that the semicolon and colon can be interesting ways to join sentences. Study usage and try in revision work.</p>

<p><b>Week Four:</b> ENDING PUNCTUATION revisited. Writers will look again at their choice in sentence endings as they draft.</p>	<p><b>Week Four:</b> FRAGMENTS. “What are fragments?” discuss as well as <i>why</i> they are not sentences.</p>	<p><b>Week Four:</b> SUBJECT- VERB AGREEMENT. Students revise writing so that subject and verb agree.</p>	<p><b>Week Four:</b> SUBJECT VERB AGREEMENT. Students are practicing subject verb agreement as they are drafting their own writing.</p>	<p><b>Week Four:</b> SUBJECT VERB AGREEMENT. Writers practice subject verb agreement as they write.</p>	<p><b>Week Four:</b> COMMAS in lists. Writers learn how commas separate items in a list and we revise our writing to include proper punctuation.</p>	<p><b>Week Four:</b> COMMAS in lists revisited. Students learn how to separate items in lists and use this as they draft their own writing.</p>	<p><b>Week Four:</b> APOSTROPHES revisited. Writers understand how apostrophes signify possessive forms and contractions.</p>
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## Developing Thought-Full Students

Joyce Kilner

### Introduction

From the first time I attempted to align my learning objectives to Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs), it became apparent to me that not only did I believe that I needed to get my students to think, but the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction valued this as well. It was apparent to me that learning procedures and working problems alone was not enough to provide an enriching mathematical experience that would lead to the type of understanding necessary for my students to retain, apply, have meaningful mathematical experiences—or meet state standards. State standards employ words such as, analyze, conclude, verify, relate, describe, justify, validate, contrast, construct, and interpret far more than they mention solve, simplify, apply, identify, use, and compute. It was obvious to me that the latter would be far easier to implement and far less beneficial for my students. Additionally, during my student teaching experience, I discovered how difficult it can be to engage students in the thinking process and I observed that the majority of students were hesitant to do so. The thought kept haunting me, “How can I engage students in the thinking process, develop their intellectual skills, and motivate them toward further thinking and learning?” In order to answer the questions of how to do this, I felt that I would first have to better define the processes I wanted students to engage in. What does it mean for someone to be thoughtful or thought-full? Once I knew what I was looking for I would know when it had been achieved.

In an effort to answer my questions, I read and studied three books. I used *Intellectual Character: What It Is, Why It Matters, And How To Get It*, by Ron Ritchhart as the framework for my paper. *The First Days of School*, by Harry K. and Rosemary T. Wong was used for contrast to Ritchhart’s ideas. And *Implementing Standards-Based Mathematics Instruction: A Casebook for Professional Development*, by Mary Kay Stein, Margaret Schwan Smith, Marjorie A. Henningsen and Edward A. Silver was used for its specifically mathematical content and for the examination of case studies for the implementation and maintenance of high levels of cognitive demand. I also consulted the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics *Principles and Standards for School Mathematics* for ideas about communication in mathematics.

### What is a Thought-full Student?

When I envision my class of thought-full students I see them problem solving and decision making—collectively and individually. I visualize students listening to, considering, analyzing, and developing ideas as they hypothesize, justify, reason, and explore thoughts—independently and collaboratively. I do not imagine that this level of thinking will operate effectively for everyone on the first day, nor do I assume that this type of thought process is something each student either possess or lacks; rather, it is a goal that students and the class as a whole can work toward. I picture students engaged in a process that involves the development of dispositions and habits of the mind that will benefit them well beyond the time they spend with me. In his book on intellectual character, Ron Ritchhart (2002) states that these are the most important qualities children take with them. “I contend that what stays with us from our education are patterns; patterns of behavior, patterns of thinking, patterns of interaction. These patterns make up our character, specifically our intellectual character” (p. 9). I want to help mold my students’ intellectual character so they have tools to employ that will help them gain understanding in

mathematics as well as any other field of interest they choose to pursue. More specifically, Ritchhart identifies some of the dispositions that shape and motivate intellectual pursuit as curiosity, open-mindedness, metacognition, the seeking of truth and understanding, strategic thinking, and skepticism (p. 31). Exploring each of these six dispositions will help to identify them more clearly and establish the importance of the cultivation of each.

1) To be curious is to be inquisitive, inquiring, and interested. People who are curious are engaged in the world about them—they look for questions or problems to solve. From the commonplace, routine, and tedious, the curious person finds things to wonder about. Through comparison and contrast, careful scrutiny, and close observation, patterns emerge and ideas, questions, and possible pathways to solutions begin to develop. Unlike the disinterested or uncurious, the inquisitive mind does not passively accept all that it receives, but chooses to interact with it instead.

2) Open-mindedness allows a person to take in new information and confront one's self about what was previously accepted. Flexibility of this kind *invites* instead of *dismisses* conflicting ideas in order to afford the opportunity to expand and challenge prior understanding. It also accepts and considers the importance of perspective in gaining knowledge. This disposition of the mind guards against a person's knowledge becoming rigid and stagnant.

3) Metacognition, or the act of reflecting upon how one thinks, has been identified with effective learners. Answering the question, "How do I know what I know?" can enlighten the poser of the question. Reflection of this kind can lead to uncovering misinformation, misunderstandings, lack of information on a particular topic, or validate the reasonableness of it. Thus, metacognition can be a useful tool in discovering errors in conceptual and procedural knowledge and for reinforcing and justifying currently held ideas.

4) The seeking of truth and understanding entails more than being exposed to facts and accepting given details. A seeker of truth and understanding actively works to expose information beyond what lies on the surface. Students searching for this kind of knowledge will likely ask themselves repeatedly why something is as it appears to be. Ritchhart explains that the seeking of truth and understanding is facilitated by "mental moves" that include "looking for connections, exploring applications and consequences, pushing ideas to the limits, pulling ideas apart, contrasting one idea with another, and building explanations" (p. 29). Truth seekers believe that when understanding is enhanced, the truth is closer to being attained.

5) Strategic thinking involves planning how to go about reasoning in relation to a particular idea. It involves forethought and a deliberate plan of action. Strategies that will most likely be fruitful for the given situation are decided upon and planned for use. The resulting effect is one of focusing thought in a way that avoids being unnecessarily distracted or sidetracked and provides a goal orientated plan of attack.

6) Skepticism involves a healthy dose of distrust in the facts as they are presented. Not completely accepting information at face value or believing that there is more to the truth than currently is known is increasingly important given the increasing amount of information available and the number of sources that disseminate it. Hand in hand with skepticism goes the ambition to investigate, explore and verify information. "Being skeptical allows us to follow others' reasoning and examine it carefully so that we can be critically discerning consumers of ideas" (p. 30).

Being a thought-full student requires not only acquiring appropriate dispositions of thought and developed patterns of behavior, but also requires the desire to make use of those dispositions and behaviors consistently and successfully. Educators who understand that teaching should be less concerned with instructional efficiency, requiring the completion of tasks, and moving through

the curriculum are more likely to want to engage their students in thinking and will want to promote the development of the intellectual skills just mentioned. These are the skills students require to meet and exceed state standards, and to be successful learners now and for the rest of their lives—in any field of endeavor.

### **How is a Thought-full Student Developed?**

The development of thought-full students begins on the first day of class, claims Ron Ritchhart. He maintains that educators tell their students by their words, actions, and through the environment what is valued most (Ritchhart, 2002). Likewise, Harry and Rosemary Wong, in their popular book on classroom management, assert that “What you do on the first days of school will determine your success or failure for the rest of the school year”(Wong & Wong, 2001, p. 3). Although they agree on the importance of informing students from the start, Ritchhart and the Wongs disagree about what should be taught on the first day of school. Wong and Wong argue that the emphasis should be on establishing a well-managed class. Therefore, they emphasize control, efficiency, and effectiveness. “Education is teaching people to behave as they are not already behaving” (p. 7). The Wongs underscore effectiveness. The number one rule of an effective teacher, they believe, is to establish good control in the first week, adding that an effective teacher “does things right, consistently,” “has positive expectations for student success”, and “is an extremely good classroom manager”(pp. 7, 8). Ritchhart summarizes the Wongs’ definition of success.

. . . student success means doing well in the school environment, which in turn tends to be defined as scoring well on standardized tests and getting good grades. Teacher success is defined as having students who are successful at these endeavors while also having a smoothly run (read: quiet) class.(2002, p. 217)

While the Wongs seem to value the type of success they claim springs forth from a well-managed classroom, Ritchhart values establishing standards for learning and interaction from the first day. Specifically, he believes that teachers should be explicit about exactly what the demands for thinking will be and “begin to enculturate them in new norms of thinking and ways of interacting with curricular content”(p. 220). If success is judged by classroom order, then it makes sense to focus on rules and consequences. However, if success is judged by the level of student engagement with the material and the development of new thinking skills, it makes sense to convey through the environment, words, and actions what is valued most from the start.

### **Creating a Thought-full Environment**

From the moment students walk into a classroom, they begin to evaluate the teacher, the subject matter, and class expectations. Much information can be gathered from the arrangement of the desks, what is hanging on the wall, items displayed on the teacher’s desk, and the kinds of materials that are present and accessible in the room. It is wise for a teacher to utilize the classroom environment to establish and reinforce thinking norms for the rest of the year. By using the physical setting well, a teacher can convey explicit messages that promote thinking, risk taking, and positive attitudes about learning. Ritchhart proposes posting thoughtful questions and quotes that support thinking throughout the classroom. He persuades teachers to consider the big, engaging questions the class will be addressing during the upcoming months and place them about the room. He advocates letting the walls teach by displaying encouraging quotes. Some examples include:

- A ship in port is safe, but that's not what ships are built for.
- When you're searching for new information, be an explorer.
- When you're turning your resources into new ideas, be an artist.
- When you're evaluating the merits of a new idea, be a judge.
- When you're carrying your idea into action, be a warrior.
- I'd rather know some of the questions than all of the answers.
- Why do people seek to discover what is unknown?
- How can we all be individuals as equal parts of a whole?(Ritchhart, 2002, pp. 58, 60)

Aside from encouraging students to think and informing them of the standard of cognitive demand that will be required in this class from day one, the messages will linger the entire year. As the questions are posed during class and the posters are referred to, students have already become familiar with them. In addition, when students' minds wander, these questions and quotes become gentle reminders of expectations and inspiration at the time the students need them most. Likewise, artifacts present in the room, samples of student work, bulletin boards, and even the ceilings can be used to support the development of thought-full students. This practice stands in contrast to the type of information students gather from the environment of the typical classroom. Ordinarily students find messages designed to keep them working, obedient, and to remind them of state standards. It is apparent which messages would be most beneficial to send if the intent is to advocate learning and the employment of thinking skills.

### **Increasing Thought-full Communication**

The value of communication in the learning process is emphasized by The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM). Listed in their official positions on standards for teaching is the ability of students at all levels to communicate mathematics.

Instructional programs from prekindergarten through grade 12 should enable all students to—

- Organize and consolidate their mathematical thinking through communication.
- Communicate their mathematical thinking coherently and clearly to peers, teachers, and others.
- Analyze and evaluate the mathematical thinking and strategies of others.
- Use the language of mathematics to express mathematical ideas precisely. (*Principles and Standards for School Mathematics*, 2005, p. 268)

Talking about new ideas helps us to make sense of them and helps to guide our thinking in new directions. “Given the importance of such talk to thinking, it's not surprising that thoughtful classroom environments are dominated by discussion, writing, and a general sense of reciprocity in conversation” (Ritchhart, 2002, p. 112). Through the exchange of ideas, individual's thoughts can be ordered, expanded upon, analyzed for deeper understanding, added to prior knowledge, connected to concepts in different areas, and validated.

In order to facilitate thoughtful communication, a teacher must first start with a topic worthy of thought and discussion—something that involves different points of view, alternate perspectives, new ideas, and will warrant student exploration. More specifically, in mathematics, students need to be presented with problems that are cognitively engaging and involve high levels

of thinking. “Although starting with such a task does not guarantee student engagement at a high level, it appears to be a necessary condition since low-level tasks virtually never result in high-level engagement” (Stein, Smith, Henningsen, & Silver, 2000, p. 14). Simply solving meaningless equations, practicing the application of algorithms, and memorizing facts or equations will never provide adequate conversation to aid students in organizing, consolidating, analyzing or evaluating mathematical ideas. Furthermore, Stein, Smith, Henningsen and Silver claim that “it is the level and kind of thinking in which students engage that determines what they will learn”(p. 11). When teachers provide their students with problems worth solving and problems that are challenging enough to be engaging, thinking processes are implemented, students have something to say, and communication is facilitated.

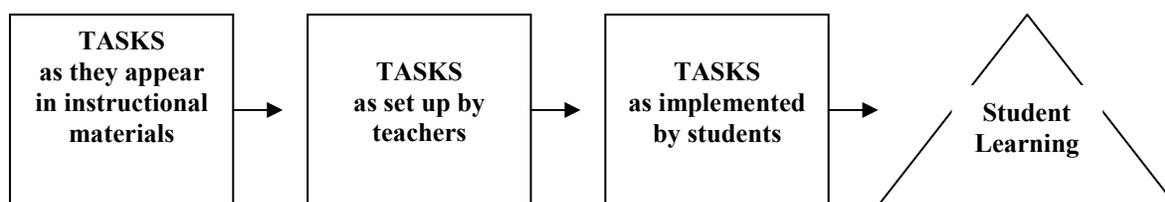
As students begin to engage in their work, implement modes of thinking, and formulate ideas to share, the teacher must provide guidance on how class members will be expected to participate. Above all, a student needs to feel that the ideas she or he has to share will be treated respectfully. The NCTM states that “teachers should build a sense of community in classrooms so students feel free to express their ideas honestly and openly, without fear of ridicule” (*Principles and Standards for School Mathematics*, 2005, p. 269). It is important the teacher emphasize that a presented idea may be new and not fully formed when it is offered for consideration. Possibilities, strategies, understandings, and prospective solutions are works in progress and should be considered and evaluated respectfully. Respect and safety are fostered when positive norms of interaction are established. The norms of interaction are the patterns of talk that dominate a classroom. Ritchhart (2002) highlights the need for teachers to “focus students’ attention on key features and attributes of a thinking-based discussion, such as responding to others’ ideas, attending to the other side of the case, generating alternative explanations, and weighing evidence” (p. 121). Over time, as this becomes the norm of interaction between students, quality communication emerges, thoughts are shared more freely, and communication skills are developed.

In the process of building a classroom of thought-full and communicative students, it is also vital to build a common vocabulary—not only about subject matter, but also regarding different ways to interact with information. When students have the same vocabulary as it relates to the content area, communication is more efficient and misunderstandings diminish. At once, fundamental meanings are shared and understanding is enhanced. Therefore, teachers should not only build a common vocabulary, but encourage its use continually. In addition, language involving interaction with information should be made explicit. Terms such as clarifying question, factual issue argument, contradiction, analogy, evidence to support, define, and counterexample give students specific ways to think differently about or support information (Ritchhart, 2002). When a teacher identifies these terms and requests or guides students to interact with ideas in a particular way, it serves to aid students’ development of thinking skills.

### **Actions That Promote Thought-fullness**

The importance of the presentation of tasks that are worthy of student engagement was previously mentioned as a needed element for high-level thinking. However, even if the task or idea presented requires high-level thinking, students may not always interact with it on the cognitive level the teacher expects. Actions taken by the teacher or the student during any of the three stages of implementation can either maintain or decrease the level of thought required and thus impact student learning. The three stages of task implementation are: 1. The choosing of the task. 2. The set-up of the task by the teacher. 3. The implementation of the task by students (Stein

et al., 2000). If the task chosen requires complex thinking and there is not a prescribed approach for solving it; if it requires the student to explore their understanding of concepts, is relevant to the student, and requires substantial cognitive effort that may involve some level of anxiety, then the task was chosen well. However, if the task was not well-chosen, the cognitive level and resultant student learning has already diminished. Once an appropriate task is chosen, the action a teacher takes during the set up begins to affect the cognitive demand of the task. If the teacher takes over difficult aspects of the task, suggests a way to solve the problem, breaks it down for the student, shares his or her own understanding, provides the correct answer, or points out errors in student work, the cognitive level of the task and the degree of learning is reduced again. Lastly, the student's own actions can affect the amount of learning by her or his involvement or lack of involvement with the task. Even when a teacher encourages and scaffolds a student's learning, there is no guarantee that the student will interact with the task in a meaningful way or will not get discouraged and quit. In this case, it is obvious that the amount of understanding gained is compromised (Stein et al., 2000). The following diagram illustrates this concept of student learning.



(Stein & Smith, 1998 as shown in Stein et al., 2000)

Endeavoring to encourage students to interact with the material, Ritchhart suggests other ways teacher action can impact learning. He recommends that teachers consistently model thinking—not just knowing the answers. When the situation presents itself, a teacher can take on the role of modeling how he or she would approach the problem (Ritchhart, 2002). For example, a teacher might say, “I don’t know the answer, but in trying to solve the problem, I would probably take an inventory of all the things I know about this situation. Then it might be helpful to. . .” In this way the teacher is also modeling the role of a learner and elevating the value of exerting effort to solve an unknown question.

Furthermore, Ritchhart (2002) advocates the use of thinking routines as a way to stimulate thoughtfulness and student participation. Much like class routines that aid in the order and function of the class, such as when and where homework is to be turned in, or how students are dismissed from class, thinking routines aid students’ thought processes and promote cognitive engagement. Similar to class routines, thinking routines are used frequently—often enough that students become familiar and comfortable with their use. These routines are also easy to teach or to learn (a benefit to new students), and usually have only a few steps. This makes it easy for a teacher to cue the class for implementation of the routine and students clearly understand what is expected (Ritchhart, 2002). Some examples of effective thinking routines include:

- Know-Want to Know-Learned lists (KWL)
- Say what, say why, say other things to try
- Asking, “What makes you say that?”
- Think-Pair-Share
- Enforcing Wait Time
- Insisting, “Justify that.”
- Asking, “Why?”

- Short journal writes
- Brainstorming
- Mind Mapping (pp. 90-92)

Through the frequent use of these strategies and others, teachers can support students in the thinking process. By using thinking routines students' ideas can be formulated and contributed to the learning community. In this way, learning is further enhanced and teachers facilitate students' discovery and internalization of knowledge instead of establishing themselves at the sole intellectual authority.

### **Conclusions**

Developing curious, open-minded, reflective, truth-seeking, strategic, and skeptical thinkers is a challenge worthy of educators' effort and attention. After all, it will be these thinking processes and dispositions of the mind students will use to become successful learners now and in the future—not the knowledge of particular facts, or the achievement of compliant behavior. If the goal is to develop thoughtful students, then thinking must be made the priority from the first day, and the establishment of classroom norms for interaction with complex material is necessary. Through the creation of an environment that promotes positive and supportive attitudes, along with the facilitation of respectful and student-centered communication, and by the maintenance of high-levels of cognitive demand and student engagement, thought-full students will emerge.

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## Native History Curriculum

Jerad Koepp

### Overview

During my time student teaching at an Indian school, I was disappointed at the absence of a cohesive Native history curriculum to scaffold off the wealth of cultural capital and experience of the students. I found myself adapting the Euro-centric history textbooks to include the missing history of Native Americans. In order to create a secondary level history curriculum that was transformative rather than additive, I began researching the cultural confluence between European and Native Americans in early American history. The findings were revolutionary and empowering for my students in the process of re-evaluating Euro-centric textbooks.

The foundation of an effective curriculum is consistency. In the process of creating this curriculum, I conducted an informal meta-study of the available historical research on the influences of Native Americans on the roots of American government. I found a wealth of resources scattered around libraries and the internet. Many of the resources originated as an area of study in the late sixties and early seventies while the American Indian Movement was at its peak. The research then set the stage for historians to begin research into a traditionally unrepresented part of the history of Euro-America. However, despite a breadth of research, there has been little consistency in maintaining a collaborative movement advocating a transformative history of Native Americans and their influence upon Euro-Americans.

The result of my research is a 168-page curriculum guide along with a thirty-page student workbook that I adapted from a master's paper written by Barbara Gray (1999). I chose to use Gray's work primarily because a fellow social studies teacher was already using it in his classroom. The reading level was not age appropriate and the themes required extensive instruction in order for them to make sense. The fact that this essay was already in use made it a wonderful opportunity to collaborate with the teacher and implement it where it had already received exposure. The student's familiarity with the teacher's use of the essay, I believe, will also provide consistency once they start using the workbook.

### Readings

I read numerous books that dealt directly or indirectly with the issues of Pan-Indianism rather than texts that focused on specific tribes. I believe that Native American students must become aware of the collective efforts of tribes around North America in order to develop transformative ideas regarding historical interaction between tribes and Euro-Americans. The issue of Pan-Indianism is still a controversial one, which is why no part of this curriculum guide addresses or debates it outright. However, the reading resources I used for the development of the guide speak strongly to the issue.

In addition to the work of Barbara Grey, I also read and was influenced by authors such as Dennis Banks, Sherman Alexie, Leonard Peltier, Vine Deloira Jr., an anthology of Native American history essays by native authors in the book *Exiled in the Land of the Free* (1992), Jack Weatherford, and Lemont's *American Indian Constitutional Reform and the Rebuilding of Nations* (2006).

Dennis Banks' most recent work, *Objibwa Warrior and the Rise of the American Indian Movement* (2007), details the formation of his Indian identity rather later in life that is also a key issue for many mixed and full-blooded Native students today. This book also provides an

inspirational narrative of Indian empowerment. I used excerpts from this text as journaling prompts that can be used at anytime during the curriculum to start a day or as a reflective writing prompt.

Sherman Alexie's latest book, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part Time Indian* (2007), takes on controversial issues in contemporary Indian identity head on in a way that is accessible and interesting to young adults of all ages. This book deals with a Spokane teenager who wants to escape the struggles of his reservation in order to make a better life for him and manage to preserve the legitimacy of his Native heritage. This book relates to almost any bi or multi-racial student and I believe is key to building a sense of pride and empowerment in a transformative Native curriculum. However, for this curriculum guide I chose only excerpts for journaling exercises or starting a classroom discussion on the issues that Alexie raises.

Leonard Peltier's prison writings, *My Life is my Sun Dance* (1999), is another moving and insightful look at the challenges facing Native Americans. Peltier writes on issues regarding violence, drug and alcohol abuse, poverty, solidarity, and political action just to name a few. This book could easily become a unit alone, however, I have used his short journal entries as journaling prompts or extension activities in my class in the past. This prior success led me to add excerpts from this text as possible journaling prompts as well.

Vine Deloria Jr's, *Custer Died for Your Sins* (1998), is a poignant manifesto challenging the American dominance and exercise of plenary power over Indian tribes. Deloria's work is moving and a great resource for building a sense of political empowerment in students and building a transformative multi-cultural curriculum.

*Exiled in the Land of the Free* (1992) is the quintessential historical reference book for the influences of Native Americans on Euro-Americans. This anthology of essay by Native historians goes into groundbreaking territory to break the myths created by Euro-American historical hegemony. If there is one book to fuel a Native history curriculum, this is it. This was perhaps one of my greatest inspirations for creating this project.

*American Indian Constitutional Reform and the Rebuilding of Native Nations* is the go-to book on understanding the confusing topic of tribal governments. Most tribes operate under a government structure dictated to them by the U.S. government, others retained traditional councils, and others have a mix. Navigation of the varying structures and controversies of each structure is addressed directly by various authors. This book is necessary when trying to create a scaffolding for Native students to approach American government.

### **Curriculum Guide:**

I organized the curriculum guide so that each lesson builds upon the next. However, I took efforts to make sure that each lesson could be used individually and maintain its historical context. The guide starts out with an introduction followed by the workbook.

### **The Workbook**

The workbook, *The Iroquois Confederacy and the Roots of American Government*, supplements the standard public school textbooks that state that the roots of American government exclusively originated in Ancient Athens, Rome, and English philosophers. The Iroquois Confederacy is the world's oldest working democracy and this workbook allows students to explore the history first hand.

This workbook addresses numerous Washington state learning standards in the areas of social studies skills, history, and civics for the secondary level. Specific EALRs are addressed on page three of the curriculum guide.

In addition to meeting state standards, I developed section questions and activities to develop numerous learning modalities and content area skills. Nearly every section evaluates for key terms, comprehension, main ideas, and reflections. An electronic version of the workbook is available with the text version so teachers may adapt questions based upon classroom needs.

Perhaps one of the most time consuming adaptations I made to Gray's work was developing visual graphics representing the flow of democracy in the different councils. A teacher I knew had used the unmodified essay and expressed concern that students had a deal of difficulty visualizing the hierarchies in the council governments. To accommodate this, I reworded the text of the essay in sections and represented key concepts with visual images.

### **Primary Documents**

In order to make history come alive, I believe that students need to interact with primary documents. The amount of primary documents available for a Native history curriculum is nearly limitless. Few groups of people have so many government documents as Native Americans. In this guide, I chose the primary documents necessary to develop the target themes and content areas. Primary documents include the story of the Peacemaker, the Great Law of Peace (Iroquois Constitution), five Washington state Indian treaties, Bill of Rights, Indian Reorganization Act, and the Dawes Act. Further primary document ideas can be found in the outline of Federal Indian law located at the back of the curriculum guide.

Each primary document is intended to provide students the opportunity to interpret government documents and to discover how much historical and cultural impact each document had on traditional ways of living and to U.S.-Indian relations. The use of primary documents can be easily adapted to fit the cultural relevancy of the students taught or specific period of American history studied.

### **Lesson Plans**

Each lesson plan is written with clear objectives, outcomes, learning targets, student and teacher responsibilities. I have taught many of the lessons in the guide with great success, student buy-in, and student learning. The plans are interdisciplinary and reach into numerous areas of study but are focused specifically for history. The lesson plans allow opportunities for group investigations, art projects, storytelling, and mentoring.

Two lesson plans provide excellent opportunities for mentoring. The first one in the guidebook is the Peacemaker comic lesson plan. In this lesson, students must read and interpret the story of the Peacemaker, create an eight-frame comic strip, and be able to retell with the story from memory in order to utilize the cultural capital of the students. In my lesson plan, I recommend that upperclassmen present their retelling of the Peacemaker story to elementary students or have their stories videotaped.

The second collaborative lesson plan is one that I have used with great success. The Bill of Rights investigation allows students to build off the cultural scaffolding of the workbook to learn about the United States Bill of Rights. In this lesson, students are grouped, assigned an amendment, have to create a colorable picture representing the amendment, write a two-minute skit representing the skit, and have to present the skit to an elementary class. If collaboration like this is not possible, videotaping is a valuable alternative.

The other lesson plans have students investigate and interpret primary documents and learn about the relationship between the United States and sovereign Indian nations from the roots of American government up to the present.

### **Additional Resources**

Perhaps the greatest resource I found during my meta-study was an outline of federal Indian law. This outline is an essential starting point because it addresses definitions and synopsis dozens of historical documents, court cases, and history of U.S.-Indian relations.

### **Evaluation**

In order to maintain the adaptability of this curriculum to the individual needs of each classroom and varying grade levels, I deliberately left out a summative evaluation. If only the workbook is used, then a written evaluation may be preferred. However, if the curriculum guide is used in entirety then a portfolio evaluation may be used to measure student learning. In short, because this curriculum is a foundation from which to transform existing materials, evaluation possibilities are left to the discretion of skilled teachers.

### **Summary**

There is a great need for consistent and transformative Native history curricula in public schools. This secondary-level history curriculum guide intends to put within a teacher's reach a collection of resources from which to adapt and create lesson plans to transform the traditional Euro-American hegemony surrounding public school textbooks.

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**NOTE:** For a copy of the curriculum guide, please email [jeradkoepp@gmail.com](mailto:jeradkoepp@gmail.com)

## **Using Inquiry to Foster Critical Thinking in Social Studies**

Richard Lasso

### **Rationale**

My topic for this final project was examining inquiry-based learning in the social studies. I chose this topic because during my classroom observations, my practicum, and student teaching, I noticed that teaching social studies in dry passive manner has become the norm. Consequently, students are often unmotivated and disengaged. They fail to see the importance and value in having a strong background in the social studies.

I hoped to examine a method of teaching social studies that was vastly different from the way I experienced social studies in my K-12 schooling. In particular, I was looking for a form of teaching that complemented my constructivist philosophy toward learning. In addition, I was hoping to explore how inquiry-based learning could be used to make social studies more personal and relevant to the lives of students. Finally, I wanted to research how an inquiry-based approach toward teaching social studies could contribute toward developing a culture of inquiry within the classroom; a classroom environment that would encourage students to go beyond rote memorization of “facts” and would instead foster their natural curiosity and desire to explore their lives and the world they live in.

### **Process**

I took a two step approach toward researching about inquiry-based learning. Initially, I focused heavily on understanding the theory, methodology, and research that formed the foundation of inquiry-based learning as an effective teaching strategy. I did this mainly through examining books and articles related to the topic. Once I attained a solid theoretical understanding of inquiry-based learning, I proceeded to form a link between theory and practice by interviewing and observing classroom teachers.

Specifically, I engaged in classroom observations and conducted teacher interviews in order to explore how inquiry-based learning was being incorporated and implemented in various classrooms. I then went back and reexamined the literature to see how the research on inquiry based learning matched up with the feedback I was getting from teachers and what I was observing in the classrooms. The paper that follows details what I discovered in my research and the conclusions I drew about how I will use inquiry-based learning in my classroom.

### **Introduction**

A simple search on the Internet or in a library catalog for the word “globalization” returns more results of information, or sources of information, than one could examine in a lifetime. Indeed, we live in an era where knowledge and information is so ubiquitous that the present has been deemed the “Information Age.” With no end in sight for the explosion and accessibility of knowledge, today’s social studies teachers must ask themselves, “What is the best way to prepare students to live and participate in a rapidly changing, dynamic society?” An answer provided by much of the literature is that teachers shift away from teaching the social studies as knowledge to be remembered and instead focus on how knowledge is constructed and applied (Banks, 1990). Perhaps Delisle (1997) puts it best when he writes, “the most important skill schools can teach

students is how to learn on their own” (p. 11). This is the goal at the heart of inquiry-based learning.

### **Definition/Conceptualization**

Inquiry-based learning (IBL) is a philosophy of teaching more than it is a teaching strategy or pedagogical practice. IBL complements constructivism in that both recognize that the starting point for learning is the student. In other words, both take a student-centered approach toward teaching where students’ prior knowledge and cultural capital are valued and recognized as the building blocks for encouraging and fostering learning. A fundamental principle of IBL in the social studies is an emphasis on process over content (Banks, 1990). Similar to Wiggins and McTighe’s (2005) approach toward learning, IBL aims to emphasize enduring understandings and transferable skills. In the social studies, the goal is to teach students to use these understandings and skills in order to develop a framework by which to examine information.

The main framework provided by IBL is that of a scientific approach to exploring social issues by identifying problems, investigating possible explanations for the problem, and making decisions about workable solutions (Higgs & Newby, 2005). The ultimate goal of IBL, then, is to shift away from the passivity of learning through textbooks and teacher-centered lectures to a more active, student-centered form of learning. This takes the form of teacher as facilitator rather than conveyor of knowledge and centers on student questions and construction of knowledge.

### **Effective Criteria**

In most social studies classrooms the key to effectively implementing IBL is to start with small, simple tasks that do not require too much external research or time (Memory, Yoder, Bolinger, & Warren, 2004). This approach is especially important for secondary teachers because older students are more likely to have been conditioned to respond to traditional forms of schooling. During these initial stages of implementing IBL, teachers must not only start small, but they must also focus on extensive modeling and example giving.

Barell (2007) suggests that IBL should be broken down into three stages: teacher-directed inquiry, teacher-student shared inquiry, and student-directed inquiry. The goal of this approach is for teachers to begin with what is familiar and conventional for students, direct instruction. Here the teacher would be the central decision maker about what is learned, how it is learned, and why it is learned. As students begin to become familiar with the necessary critical thinking skills associated with IBL, the teacher transitions into teacher-student shared inquiry, where decisions about learning are made more democratically. The ultimate goal is for students to learn actively through student-directed inquiry, which maximizes student autonomy and ownership of their learning.

Regardless of what stage of IBL teachers choose to utilize, an effective aspect of IBL is emphasizing inquiry as a small group collaborative process rather than an individual one (Memory et al., 2004). Individual inquiry and accountability are still important aspects of IBL; however, emphasizing collaboration provides the necessary scaffolding many students need as they develop their skills to engage in IBL more fully. In addition, the benefits of small group collaboration extend beyond students supporting, questioning, and learning from one another. Students engaging in small group inquiry are essentially simulating the interaction and collaboration that historians, geographers, political scientists, etc. engage in within their respective professions, thus giving authenticity to the learning experience. In addition, the emphasis on IBL as a collaborative approach also mirrors the experiences many students will encounter, or are already experiencing, in their employment (Delisle, 1997).

By definition, choice is an inherent part of IBL. The questions students ask, the hypothesis they formulate, the predictions they make, the answers they derive, etc. are all a product of choices made by students. However, teachers often overlook this component of IBL. In order to avoid “losing control” teachers often limit both the amount and kind of choices that students can make during inquiry. Rather than being restrictive, teachers should provide a framework within which students are given autonomy. By doing so, teachers will make it more likely that students will be interested in their topics, possess the necessary investigative skills to research the topic, and have the required background knowledge to understanding their topics (Memory et al., 2004). To be sure, a restrictive approach is acceptable, even necessary, when IBL is first introduced. As students get familiar with IBL, however, teacher directed topics should increasingly give way to student choice.

Finally, IBL in the social studies requires that teachers make the inquiry process an *interdisciplinary* endeavor, not just a *multidisciplinary* one (Segall, 2000). Secondary teachers often fall into this trap because of how schools choose to organize the curriculum. One would find it difficult to locate an actual “social studies” class because the social studies are divided into disciplines (e.g. history, economics, etc.). Nonetheless, IBL requires that students be able to develop multiple lenses by which to examine phenomenon. Teachers should be explicit about ensuring all aspects of the social studies are included in student inquiry. For example, encouraging students to think about the subject of social studies as if they were a sociologist, a historian, or an economist, allows students to formulate connections between the disciplines. In addition, it presents them with a more realistic view of how phenomena are to be examined in the world; namely, that they should be explored holistically rather than within the vacuum of a single academic discipline.

### **Why It Works**

IBL is an effective approach toward promoting student learning and achievement for several reasons. At the most basic level, IBL allows information to be processed across a range of cognitive levels, thus leading to enhanced understandings and increased transferability of knowledge (Barell, 2007). As students progress through the various stages of IBL, they are exposed to multiple forms of thinking and interacting with information. For instance, a lesson on maps might begin with a simple question: “*Where do we see maps used?*” From this question, then, the teacher can set up an inquiry assignment that has students analyze a map, compare and contrast maps, create maps, evaluate maps, etc. By starting with information that students already know and then proceeding to build off that knowledge, students can increasingly take on complex tasks because they are making associations and adding to their schemas throughout the inquiry based process.

IBL also gives students ownership over their own education and learning. Aside from allowing students to be actively involved in their learning, IBL essentially situates knowledge in relation to each individual student. This is in contrast to what is normally seen in schools where all students have to situate themselves to a particular form of knowledge or form of teaching. By starting a lesson learning about things that are both personally relevant and interesting, students are more likely to feel motivated and engaged in their learning.

Perhaps the most beneficial aspect of implementing IBL is that it fosters critical thinking. In a traditional social studies classroom, for instance, teachers often spend their time breaking down complex ideas into simpler terms so that students can better understand. While this is certainly a worthwhile goal to promote student learning, it often results in students learning facts

and information in isolation. This passive approach toward learning not only limits student opportunity to reflect on what they are learning but it promotes the acceptance of truth without critique. With IBL, however, critical thinking is fostered by starting with what is presumed to be simple or commonplace and then asks students to problematize it (Segall, 2000). For example, a teacher might ask: “*Why is our school 80% white and the school across town 80% black?*” In answering this question students would be encouraged to formulate questions, consider various perspectives, make discoveries, and explore their curiosities. Using IBL in this manner also increases the opportunities for students to develop their critical thinking skills. IBL targets the most fundamental of these skills by fostering students’ ability to identify and examine assumptions, detect bias, challenge notions of “truth,” reflect on their subjectivity, and situate knowledge within a specific context.

Finally, IBL allows students to explore and experience the various social studies subjects as the dynamic, interdependent disciplines they really are. By using IBL, social studies students can begin to develop a framework by which to understand the world around them. They can look at a situation or problem and analyze it through the various lenses of the social studies disciplines. In this way, a student can examine a simple notion, for instance, his/her having to be at school, and can think about it historically (*Have people always been required to go to school? Why do I have to be in school today?*), geographically (*Do people my age in other places also have to be in school? Is school the same/different?*), economically (*What is the opportunity cost of my being here?*), politically (*Who made the decision about my having to be in school? Why was that decision made? Are the people who made that decision benefiting in some way from my having to be here?*), etc. Through IBL, students develop their critical thinking skills in ways that allow them to analyze, and perhaps more importantly, reanalyze the things they have learned, are learning, and will learn. All while giving them the tools to situate themselves within their learning.

### **Limitations/Critiques**

Despite the aforementioned benefits of IBL, this approach to teaching and learning is not without its critics. For example, research by Kirschner, Sweller, and Clark (2006) found that IBL puts too much strain on the working memory of students. In other words, requiring students to initiate learning by posing questions or exploring problems which do not have immediate solutions causes students to front load information, which, in turn, interferes with students’ ability to “accumulate knowledge into long-term memory” (Kirschner et al., 2006, p. 77). In essence, critics argue that focusing on student-centered learning essentially disregards what is known about child development. They state that most students are too novice of learners to be expected to be at the center of their education. Rather than less teacher involvement and support, students require more guidance than is traditionally provided by teachers using IBL.

Tied closely to this critique of the “novice learner” is the notion that students and teachers lack the necessary background knowledge and expertise, respectively, to successfully carry out IBL (Saye & Bush, 1999). Researchers argue that students need a certain level of knowledge about a subject or topic in order to be able to construct knowledge. If that foundation is missing, then IBL is ineffective because students simply cannot inquire about what they do not know. Kirschner et al. (2006) posit that this basic knowledge is often missing from students in IBL classrooms because there is too much of an emphasis on process over content; a practice they argue results in students being ignorant of basic facts, principles, and theories that are critical to every discipline. Similarly, teachers, unless they come from a social studies profession (e.g. as geographer, political scientist, etc), often lack the ability to guide students through inquiry or

problem solving in a way that actually leads to student learning. In other words, the activities might engage students and even be interesting, but the teacher lacks the ability to concretely tie the inquiry process into the curriculum and thus have a positive effect on student learning (T. Campbell, personal communication, February 22, 2008)

It is interesting to note that the majority of critiques about IBL stem from the process by which IBL is implemented, not the underlying philosophy. Concerns about time management, student background knowledge, and teacher's ability to facilitate IBL are all problems that are external to IBL. These concerns can be alleviated by ensuring that teachers who implement IBL are well informed about teaching through IBL, knowledgeable about their subject areas, committed to strong lesson planning, and dedicated to knowing their students well enough to include their interest and knowledge directly into IBL.

### **Conclusion**

Perhaps one of the greatest challenges faced by teachers of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is garnering student attention and interest long enough to “hook” students into learning. A traditional approach toward teaching where students are asked to be passive learners, to be talked at, and to adapt to a particular teaching style is not feasible in a world where most things outside of school promote almost the exact opposite.

Take for example the Internet. The World Wide Web is an open forum that promotes active engagement, provides numerous choices, and even allows students to create their own experience if the experience they are looking for is not offered (i.e. creating a blog or web page). With research by Lenhart, Madden, and Hitlin (2005) indicating that almost 9 out of 10 adolescents use the Internet, and are spending increasingly more time on it, it becomes evident that schools and teachers must adapt their teaching styles to at least coincide with the tools the Internet and other forms of media use to socializes students. After having researched the theoretical underpinnings of IBL and having observed how it is implemented in the classroom, I believe IBL is an effective approach toward teaching students of the “Information Age” generation.

When I initiated this project, I was hoping to research an approach to teaching and learning that would benefit my future students. I believe I was successful in this endeavor. More than that, however, I discovered the IBL as a teaching philosophy greatly benefits me as a teacher because it holds me accountable to continuously get to know my students, to deepen my understanding of the social studies, and to localize the themes and topics I teach.

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## **Moving Toward Expeditionary Learning**

Monica Lloyd

### **Introduction**

The route I have taken toward becoming a classroom teacher has been full of switch-backs. My first foray into education was as a summer camp counselor. Here I experienced the openness that youth find in the outdoors. I also led my first backpacking trips with 10-12 year old boys and then girls. After I blossomed as an outdoor educator, I eventually worked my way into a position as a program director at an herb farm. At the farm I experienced, and then directed an alternative education opportunity -- namely a work/study program. Students who came to the farm were interested in learning by doing, and about growing and using medicinal herbs. After spending three years at the Herb Farm, I had the opportunity to participate in an instructor internship program with the Voyager Outward Bound School (VOBS) in Ely, Minnesota. This was what I had been working toward all my life. I spent one summer in Ely immersed in learning experiences and growing as an educator.

At the end of my summer with VOBS, I decided that it was time to revisit formal education, and made the decision to move to Olympia and attend The Evergreen State College. As a student at Evergreen, to satiate my dream of adventure education, I became involved in The Outdoor Program and led wilderness trips. I also completed a training, which included an apprenticeship, for leading Challenge “ropes” Courses. I knew that both these adventures were important to my professional development, yet I still did not see myself as a classroom teacher. It took a suggestion from a teenager at the climbing gym in Olympia, for me to consider becoming a classroom teacher. Now, after six years away from Outward Bound and immersion in the wilderness learning experience, I am still looking for a way to uncover similar, meaningful learning experiences for youth I will come in contact with in the classroom. In a way, my journey of discovery is similar to the journey Outward Bound Wilderness took in transferring their philosophy of learning from the wilderness to the classroom by way of the learning expedition. In this paper I will explore the philosophical and theoretical foundations of Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound. In addition I will address the process educators will go through to create an Expeditionary Learning School through a contract with Outward Bound.

### **What is Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound?**

Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound, from here on referred to as ELOB, is a model that places emphasis on active learning, character growth, and teamwork. The theoretical foundations of ELOB are derived from educational ideals and insights from Outward Bound’s founder Kurt Hahn, as well as John Dewey, Eleanor Duckworth, Howard Gardner and others. Outward Bound (OB) has existed in the United States for around 50 years. In 1992 the New American Schools Development Corporation (NASDC) choose to award Outward Bound a five-year grant to develop and test the Expeditionary Learning design, and ELOB was born and set free ([www.elschools.org](http://www.elschools.org)).

Outward Bound Wilderness, the parent of ELOB, was founded on the belief that character development and self-discovery through challenging wilderness adventures will help people “achieve more than they ever thought possible” become more compassionate, and more engaged in “creating a better world” (<http://www.outwardboundwilderness.org/history.html>). Similar to a wilderness expedition, a learning expedition is a “long-term, in-depth investigation of a topic that

engage[s] students in the world through authentic projects, fieldwork, and service (Campbell et al., p 3, 1998).” The learning expedition focuses on cultivating critical thinking skills, character development and grade level requirements, which ELOB refers to as essential skills and habits. The learning expedition has three phases that mirror the three phases of an Outward Bound course. The “training,” “main,” and “final” of an OB course correspond to: the beginning of a learning expedition where students begin the exploration of the topic, the bulk of the learning expedition where students engage with content and skill building related to the expedition, and the wrap up of the expedition where students apply what they experienced, perhaps by creating a presentation (Campbell et al., 1998).

At the foundation of the Expeditionary Learning design are five core practices. These five core practices provide the framework for planning a learning expedition. The five core practices are briefly outlined below, for a more detailed explanation see Appendix A.

- Learning Expeditions: challenging, interdisciplinary, in-depth projects act as the primary curricular units.
- Active Pedagogy: students are seen as collaborative learners and make connections, see multiple perspectives, create and conduct experiments, and develop empathy and compassion.
- School Culture and Character: a set of shared beliefs, traditions, rituals that are created by the learning community and lead to a “climate of physical and emotional safety, a sense of adventure, an ethic of service and responsibility, and a commitment to high quality work (<http://www.elschools.org>).”
- Leadership and School Improvement: a professional community focused on implementing the ELOB curriculum as the method for improving students’ academic and social success.
- School Structures: ELOB schools use shared planning, looping, heterogeneous grouping, and longer academic scheduling blocks.

Additionally, a Learning Expedition is set up with the following ten “design principles” in mind:

1. The primacy of self-discovery: “learning happens best with emotion, challenge and the requisite support.”
2. The having of wonderful ideas: ELOB schools “foster curiosity about the world ...,” offer opportunities to experiment, and time to reflect on observations.
3. The responsibility for learning: “Everyone learns both individually and as part of a group.”
4. Empathy and caring: “Learning is fostered best in communities where students’ and teachers’ ideas are respected and where there is mutual trust.”
5. Success and failure: Students need to experience both success and failure to build confidence and perseverance.
6. Collaboration and competition: Students develop both individually and cooperatively and the focus is to always do one’s best work in comparison to one’s self.
7. Diversity and inclusion: “Diversity and inclusion increase the richness of ideas, creative power, problem-solving ability, and respect for others.”
8. The natural world: “A direct and respectful relationship with the natural world refreshes the human spirit and teaches the important ideas of recurring cycles and cause and effect ([www.elschools.org](http://www.elschools.org)).”

9. Solitude and reflection: Everyone needs time to hear one's thoughts, make connections, and come up with ideas.
10. Service and compassion: To help students develop attitudes and skills for being of service to others.

To tie the framework of core practices and design principles together, ELOB schools are constantly referring to the Expeditionary Learning Core Practice Benchmarks, a comprehensive (54 page) document that serves as a guide for planning an expedition, and as a rubric for evaluating the implementation of the core practices. For example the first core practice is the actual learning expedition. Within this core practice are five benchmarks beginning with the implementation of learning expeditions across the school. This benchmark has four sub-sections: the scope of the expedition, how state standards are mapped, and aligned, quality control, and documentation of the expedition. Within each of these sub-sections are more specific components that become the practical tools for teachers to use when designing and evaluating the expedition. This is just the first part out of the five sections that clarify the learning expeditions. When I found this document, I was excited because it demonstrated to me that the 'science of teaching' was being addressed in a way that would appeal to more traditionally minded teachers and administrators. It was evidence of the thoroughness of the design that could prevent opponents from viewing the program as lacking clear standards.

As a new teacher I may not get the opportunity to work at an ELOB school. Because of this reality, I am looking for ways to borrow parts of philosophy and structure of Expeditionary Learning and implement what I can in future teaching positions. Independent of the established school structure, I know I will be able to use the design principles and core practice benchmarks when planning interdisciplinary units. Specifically, the first two of the five core practices, which have to do with creating the learning expedition, will serve as a useful tool for creating interdisciplinary units.

### **Learning Expeditions**

Even with the clearly delineated structure of Expeditionary Learning, the expeditions are as rich and varied as the teachers who lead them. I visited an alternative public school in Seattle that had been in partnership with ELOB for ten years. The two 4/5<sup>th</sup> grade Learning Expeditions that I observed at Thornton Creek Elementary School were unique, as was the atmosphere of the rooms. Despite the differences, teachers and administrators at the school all agreed that students involved in the Learning Expeditions were very engaged in learning, and often carried their expedition with them into the future, with self-directed, independent research. In both classes I observed, students were on task, excited to be in class, and were able and willing to explain in depth what the expedition was about, and what they were currently working on. Additionally, this school had 100% buy-in to the ELOB philosophy and all teachers I talked to, agreed that the best part of the partnership was the training, which gave them a common language, common practices and common goals. Furthermore, many teachers felt that the trainings with ELOB helped them articulate their own philosophy of education.

At Thornton Creek, I saw two 4/5<sup>th</sup> grade expeditions. The first class' expedition was titled 'Making History'. I was so impressed with this expedition that I contacted the creator of it, Craig Coss, to gain a deeper understanding of the complexity of this simulation/game. The following excerpt is taken directly from the materials Craig has generously shared with me.

“The Making History Project is a classroom simulation humanities curriculum

wherein students, grades four and up, undertake the challenge of building a rich culture or civilization from scratch. Each simulated society begins with relatively few technologies; similar to the way early humans lived tens of thousands of years ago. During the four to seven month duration of the project, the simulation traverses thousands of years of cultural complexity and brings some of the civilizations into a bronze or an iron age. The challenge of the simulation is to cooperate as a team: to create and develop a rich culture; to work with specific and limited natural resources; to trade and interact with other societies; and to research, invent, and document the whole development in journals. The students celebrate their achievements and conclude the project with a presentation of traditional foods, stories, dances, and ceremonies developed by their truly unique societies.”

What impressed me most about this expedition was the level of student engagement, and the high standards expected of students, which resulted in high quality student work.

The second class’ expedition was titled ‘Ancient Egypt’, and it explored the culture and ecosystem of the Egyptians. Through this exploration students researched and created historical fiction pieces and a play. Included in Appendix B are publications that Thornton Creek Elementary put out that explain many of the learning expeditions at the school over the course of two years as well as examples of learning expeditions from other ELOB schools. Again, when I observed this classroom students were very engaged in producing high quality work and appeared to be working in an atmosphere of mutual respect, trust and collaboration.

### **Planning a Learning Expedition**

Since the process of creating a learning expedition is a process that any teacher interested in developing an interdisciplinary curriculum can use, I will give a detailed explanation of the six steps for planning a learning expedition. The first step is to become familiar with as many different expeditions as possible. In addition, other sources for other learning expeditions can be found in *Journeys Through Our Classrooms* (Mednick and Udall eds., 1996). Second, a topic that the expedition can be built around is chosen. Integral to the entire process, but occurring after a topic has been chosen, is input from colleagues. As teachers at Thornton Creek shared, developing a learning expedition is a group process. Before school starts, the entire teaching staff meets to assist each other in refining their expedition. A map is created with the topic at the center and all suggestions, questions, resources, connections, activities, and assessments are mapped. From the map main ideas and concepts are organized into a rough sequence. Similar to the idea of backward design, the third step is to create some broad guiding questions that will guide students through the expedition. Fourth, learning goals are established that align with state standards and developmental needs. Fifth, learning activities, or projects are developed that “help students develop the understanding and abilities reflected in the learning goals” (Campbell et al., 1998, p. 8). Planning for ongoing pre- formative, and summative assessments happens throughout the process. Finally, a calendar or timeline of the learning expedition is created for scheduling purposes. The literature on planning a learning expedition suggests a final reflection for revision and documentation to ensure professional growth (Campbell et al., 1998). See Appendix C for resources on planning a learning expedition. When talking with teachers from Thornton Creek about planning a learning expedition, a lot of value was placed on the collaborative process at the beginning as an essential component of well thought out expeditions.

## **Becoming an ELOB School**

There are basically three options available to educators, administrators or community members interested in starting an Expeditionary Learning School. Regardless of the vehicle for becoming affiliated with ELOB, establishing a contract takes time and a commitment from the administration and teachers to the core practices and design principles. Most schools take some time to visit existing ELOB schools, and attend staff development workshops. According to the literature provided by ELOB it takes most schools two to three years to establish the basic practices and up to five years before the model shows positive student results ([www.elschools.org](http://www.elschools.org)). The first and least common option, with what I see as the least amount of external restriction, is starting or transforming an existing private school. Yet, there is currently only one ELOB private school in existence at this time, though I do not know the reason there are not more.

The second option for becoming an ELOB school is to create a Charter School, which is potentially a three-year process, and is dependent on individual state laws (Washington State currently has no charter laws). Briefly, if a state has charter laws (see [www.uscharterschools.org](http://www.uscharterschools.org) for a state by state listing), the process of establishing a charter school involves two planning phases. The first phase involves exploring the reason for choosing to start a charter school, examining funding options, establishing a design team and framework and discovering community willingness. Many of these steps would be taken as part of developing a contract with ELOB, and the web site offers a clear plan aligned with the US Charter Schools plan for educators interested in creating a charter school. The second phase involves drafting the charter, presenting it to the charter agency and getting it approved ([www.uscharterschools.org](http://www.uscharterschools.org)). For more information on Charter Schools and the National Education Association's policy statement on charters see Appendix D.

The third and most common option is to get an established or newly formed Public School to contract with ELOB. However, working within the confines of the Public School system can be difficult. The one public ELOB school I visited had recently experienced just how difficult it could be. The school had maintained ten years of contracting with ELOB, and had the necessary funding to continue the program. Yet they were unable to fulfill the requirements of 30 professional development days per school year because of the district requirements for a new math curriculum, and did not contract with ELOB this year. As a result the learning expedition was set aside for the first part of the day and was more of an additive element of the school curriculum. For a table on implementing Expeditionary Learning see Appendix E.

Contracting with ELOB through any of the three options is expensive, approximately \$65,000 per year for the first five years and \$25,000 for a maintenance contract. Much of the cost of the contract is tied to the intense professional development that takes place to teach and train teachers in the expeditionary learning design. The professional development is structured around becoming proficient in all five core practices. See Appendix F for a breakdown of professional development during the first year. That is where grants come in. In 2003 The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation awarded five-year grants to 20 public schools to incorporate Expeditionary Learning, and from 1991 - 2004 The New American School Development Corporation (NASDC) also provided grant money for start-up. However, in 2004 NASDC (which had become New American Schools) merged with the American Institute for Research (AIR). AIR is a large institution that is now more focused on "research in postsecondary education" ([www.airweb.org](http://www.airweb.org)). Another grant option is federal funding from Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) grants ([www.elschools.org](http://www.elschools.org)).

According to the literature on the ELOB web site, in 2004, out of a total of 136 schools affiliated with ELOB, 101 were public schools, 34 were charter schools and one was private. I decided to visit, via the web, school websites listed and linked to ELOB's site to see how accurate the numbers were today, and to investigate whether the schools still existed and if they were portraying themselves as Expeditionary Learning Schools. This is what I found: 86 web sites of public schools, 43 web sites of charter schools, 3 web sites of private schools, 21 of the listed schools had no information on the web (12 of these are schools in Puerto Rico). Of the 82 web sites of public schools 66 were actively presenting themselves as ELOB schools, of the 43 web sites of charter schools 40 were actively presenting themselves as ELOB schools, of the private schools, 1 was a boarding school with a secure site and not noticeably an ELOB school, and 2 private schools of which only 1 was clearly an ELOB school. Additionally 2 ELOB schools were bilingual Spanish/English. In all, 144 school web sites I was able to visit (of the 151 listed) only 107 were in seemingly affiliated with ELOB. I found this information interesting, especially after visiting a Seattle school whose web site stated that they were an ELOB school, but who did not actually have a contract with ELOB this year.

### **Drawbacks of ELOB**

According to the principal at Thornton Creek, working with ELOB does have a few drawbacks. Although the site council at Thornton Creek was efficient at raising funds, the primary downside is the cost of a full-time contract with ELOB. The second drawback is the time requirements for the contract. ELOB requires a minimum of 30 days a year per school for on site training and planning. This becomes a drawback if a district has professional development days that require mandatory attendance of all district teachers. The third drawback Thornton Creek experienced was an ELOB design expert who did not have experience with elementary schools or students and was not able to offer relevant age appropriate examples when assisting teachers with planning; although this only happened once during the ten years of contracting with ELOB. Finally, a drawback of any alternative programming is that some community members, school counselors, district teachers and students may hold misconceptions about the program based on poor public relations, specific incidents, or myth.

### **Benefits of Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound**

According to the literature available via the ELOB website, research shows the following beneficial results:

- “Significant improvements in student achievement as measured by standardized tests and portfolios of student work.”
- An improvement in “instructional practices and school culture.”
- An improvement in “student attendance and parent participation.”
- A reduction in “disciplinary actions.”

A student's testimonial expressed that he felt like “a real scientist” a real reporter and an encyclopedia author ([www.elschools.org](http://www.elschools.org)). The only definitive study I reviewed evaluated five ELOB schools from 1993 – 1996, and did case studies on a representative sample of 29 students from the five schools. This study found:

- Through implementing the Expeditionary Learning design, “relationships among students and teachers, among teachers, between parents and school staff, and between school leaders and teachers” “made significant changes.”

- Student surveys showed positive student outcomes as measured by student engagement, school bonding, and student perception of the implementation of Expeditionary Learning.
- “Significant increases in standardized test scores in reading and math.”
- Social and emotional growth of the majority of case-study students “helped them do well in and like school.” (Weinbaum, Gregory, Wilkie, Hirsch, and Fancsali, 1996, p. 8).

These results show me that Expeditionary Learning, which encompasses a plethora of best practices, *is* effective teaching. Moreover, what I observed in the classroom, and what I have learned as part of my research convinces me of the successfulness of Expeditionary Learning. The most convincing evidence comes from the students. When I see, hear, or read about students who can articulate what they are learning and are excited about how they are learning, I am convinced that quality teaching is occurring.

### **Conclusion**

Throughout my exploration, I have been concerned mainly with the philosophy of Expeditionary Learning, and the process of becoming an ELOB school. I rationalized that by understanding the philosophy, I would be able to emulate a learning expedition independently; and by becoming familiar with the process of becoming an ELOB school, I would understand the rigor that ELOB has established for developing Expeditionary Learning Schools and training teachers. Overall, what I found most interesting were the similarities between creating a Learning Expedition and much of what I have learned in Evergreen’s Masters in Teaching program regarding other interdisciplinary curriculum development models and best practices. I am excited about the opportunity to use the core practices and design principles as tools for curriculum planning, and implement learning expeditions in my future teaching. In addition, I believe that presenting the metaphor of learning as an expedition can spark curiosity and engage students.

## Resources and References

Association for Institutional Research web address: [www.airweb.org](http://www.airweb.org)

Campbell, M., Liebowitz, M., Mednick, A., Rugen, L., eds. Guide for Planning A Learning Expedition: Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound. Kendall/Hunt: Dubuque, IA.

Coss, Craig “The Making History Project” <http://www.craigcoss.com/>

Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound Web address: <http://www.elschools.org/>

Outward Bound Web address: <http://www.outwardboundwilderness.org/history.html>

The Center For Education Reform web address:

<http://www.edreform.com/index.cfm?fuseAction=document&documentID=994>

US Charter Schools Web address: <http://www.uscharterschools.org/>

Weinbaum, A., Gregory, L., Wilkie, A., Hirsch L., and Fancsali, C. Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound, Summary Report. Academy for Educational Development: New York, NY. 1996, p. 8.

Interviews with:

Patchen Homitz TEAM Program, Teacher at High School Alternative Program.

Chuck Ford TEAM Program, Teacher at a High School Alternative Program.

Teachers at Thornton Creek/AEII an Expeditionary Learning School.

## **Appendices**

- Appendix A: Expeditionary Learning Core Practice Benchmarks, 2003
- Appendix B: Examples of learning expeditions
- Appendix C: Resources for Planning a Learning Expedition
- Appendix D: Charter School Information and NEA policy statement
- Appendix E: Becoming an Expeditionary Learning School
- Appendix F: Professional Development for Expeditionary Learning Schools
- Appendix G: Interview with Thornton Creek Teachers and Principal

### **Appendix A: Expeditionary Learning Core Practice Benchmarks**

<http://elschools.org/publications/CorePracticeBenchmarks.pdf>

This is a downloadable PDF document

### **Appendix B: Examples of Learning Expeditions**

From AEII@Decatur/Thornton Creek Elementary School

[http://www.seattleschools.org/schools/ae2/pdfs/ELNEWS\\_06\\_07.pdf](http://www.seattleschools.org/schools/ae2/pdfs/ELNEWS_06_07.pdf)

[http://www.seattleschools.org/schools/ae2/pdfs/ELNews05\\_06.pdf](http://www.seattleschools.org/schools/ae2/pdfs/ELNews05_06.pdf)

[http://www.seattleschools.org/schools/ae2/elob/elob2003\\_04/IntroPage.htm](http://www.seattleschools.org/schools/ae2/elob/elob2003_04/IntroPage.htm)

## **Appendix C: Resources for Planning a Learning Expedition**

From Campbell et al's *Guide for Planning A Learning Expedition: Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound*. Kendall/Hunt: Dubuque, IA.

### **Qualities of Learning Expeditions**

Learning Expeditions:

- embody the Expeditionary Learning design principles.
- build a strong connection to the world, inside and outside the classroom; they focus on linking the classroom and the outside world, fully drawing on school and community resources.
- have high standards and stakes; there is an emphasis on student work of consequence, quality, and value in major projects as well as ongoing smaller tasks and assignments.
- focus on assessment and understanding – fostering a continuous process of reflection, critique, and revision among teachers and students. They develop the habit of reflecting on their work and seeking feedback.
- foster an ethic and practice of service – in the classroom, school and wider community.
- ask teachers to draw on their passion for learning and alertness to opportunity, and endeavor to help their students share the same.
- support students in taking responsibility for their own learning.
- create a spirit of adventure and challenge that permeates the classroom and school.
- require change in the use of time and space to make room for in-depth study, fieldwork, collaboration among teachers, and multidisciplinary connections.
- call for leadership, teamwork, and organization on the part of teachers and students.
- require new roles for learners; groups of students collaborate as crews, and individual students become explorers, apprentices, and even experts.

## **Outline of a Sequence for Planning**

Selecting a Topic

Keeping a running list of resources

Creating an outline or sequence of ideas

Proceeding from four different points:

1. Guiding questions
2. Learning goals and standards
3. Projects
4. Final assessment

Planning a project in detail, including ongoing assessment

Creating a calendar/timeline for the expedition

Completing the written planning outline

Planning, revision, and follow-up throughout the expedition

Final reflection, revision, and documentation

## Appendix D: Charter School Information and NEA policy statement

The short history of US Charter Schools officially began in “1991 when Minnesota passed the first charter school law, with California following suit in 1992. By 1995, 19 states had signed laws allowing for the creation of charter schools ([www.uscharterschools.org](http://www.uscharterschools.org)).” The purposes for providing continued support, legislative and monetary, for charter schools are multiple. The following list is taken directly from the US Charter Schools web site:

- Increase opportunity for learning and access to quality education for all students
- Create choice for parents and students within the public school system
- Provide a system of accountability for results in public education
- Encourage innovative teaching practices
- Create new professional opportunities for teachers
- Encourage community and parent involvement in public education
- Leverage improved public education broadly

Starting a charter school is a lengthy process. First, it requires exploring the state requirements, community readiness for supporting a charter school, creating a “design team and framework” for the school itself, and coming up with start up funds. Funding can be obtained through federal [maximum three year grant, includes a maximum 18 months of funded planning (NELB, 2004)], and state planning grants, but often comes in part from local private or corporate grants. After the initial exploration, a “core founding group (design team, organizing committee)” works to create a plan for the design of the school. Suggestions for whom to include as part of a core group include: curriculum and assessment experts, teachers, community members, financial advisers, fundraising experts, management experts, legal consultants, and persons with experience writing charter documents. The “comprehensive school plan” needs to include: a clear mission and vision for the school, “an overview of the instructional program,” an outline of governance/administrative structures, necessary facilities, and a budget outline. ([www.uscharterschools.org](http://www.uscharterschools.org)).

Next comes writing the official charter document and submitting the application to the agency that will grant the charter. One condition for getting the charter approved is getting community buy-in. The US charter schools web site suggests having a specific statement for “how your school will meet specific needs in the district,” this can include letters of support. Finally, once the charter is approved, comes the pre-school-operation planning. Suggestions are to create a timeline of tasks that need to be accomplished, agreeing with district or sponsors on” formal operating agreements,” enacting the organizational/administrative plans, recruiting and admitting students and staff, formalizing the instructional programs (in this case ELOB would step in and provide staff training to help teachers create and teach Learning Expeditions), and “secure facility and support services ([www.uscharterschools.org](http://www.uscharterschools.org)).” From there, the last step is starting school, troubleshooting, ongoing training, community building in and out of school, improving structure and instruction, and collecting student data to support renewing the charter after the 3-5 year initial charter expires.

According to a 2004 publication on *The Charter School Program, Title V, Part B Non-Regulatory Guidance*, the purpose of Charter School Program (CSP) “is to expand the number of high-quality charter schools available to students across the Nation by providing Federal financial assistance for charter school program design, initial implementation, and planning; and to evaluate

the effects of charter schools, including their effects on students [academic achievement] ..., staff, and parents (NCLB, 2004).”

Because charter schools allow for lots of freedom of instructional models, many people see charter schools in a negative light. One “common criticisms,” taken from The Center for Education Reform’s web site, is that charter schools help create further separation between lower and higher socio-economic status students. When in fact, “[m]ore than 22 studies demonstrate that charters are overserving those traditionally underserved by failing schools, such as low socio-economic populations and students at risk of dropping out (<http://www.edreform.com/index.cfm?fuseAction=document&documentID=994>).”

Regardless of personal opinion regarding charter schools, “NEA supports innovation in public education ...” through charter schools with the recommendations in the table below, which are largely in line with the requirements set out in NCLB’s 2004 *Charter School Program Guidance*.

<b>Criteria for granting Charters</b>	<b>Design and Operation of Charters</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Charter schools should “serve as experimental laboratories for field-testing curricular and instructional innovations, with an eye to weather those innovations can be incorporated into ‘mainstream’ public schools.</li> <li>• Charter schools should “provide educational alternatives for students who cannot adequately be served in mainstream public schools.”</li> <li>• Local school boards should evaluate charter applications “for educational management and capacity” as well determining how the charter school will impact local public schools.</li> <li>• “Private for-profit entities should not be eligible to receive a charter.”</li> <li>• Charters should not be granted “for the purpose of home-schooling,” this includes online schools.</li> <li>• Private schools should be prohibited from converting to a charter school.</li> <li>• “Charters should be of limited duration so that the results of the experiment can be assessed.”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In order for charter schools to “achieve their intended outcome ... charter schools should be freed from some of the requirements that apply to mainstream public schools, and have increased autonomy in regard to ... curriculum, instruction, staffing, budget, internal organization, calendar, and schedule.”</li> <li>• Charter schools “should be subject to the same local and state statutory and administrative requirements as public mainstream schools.” These requirements include: “health and safety, public records and meetings, licensure/certification of teachers and other employees, finance and auditing, student assessment, civil rights, and labor relations.”</li> <li>• Charter schools should be free of any charges, and voluntary.</li> <li>• “Charter schools should have some discretion in selecting or rejecting students.</li> <li>• There should be no screening of students on the basis of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, English-language proficiency, family income, athletic ability, special needs, parental participation in school affairs, intellectual potential, academic</li> </ul>
<hr/> <p><b>NEA’s Organizational Values</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Charter schools should be subject to the same public sector labor relations statutes as mainstream public schools.”</li> <li>• “Charter schools employees should</li> </ul>	

<p>have the same collective bargaining rights ... as their counterparts in mainstream public schools.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sectarian private schools “should be ineligible to become charter schools.”</li> </ul>	<p>achievement, or what it costs to educate particular students.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Charter schools should not disproportionately divert resources from mainstream public schools.”</li> </ul>
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(<https://www.nea.org/charter/neacharterpolicy.html>)

Resources:

NCLB, Charter Schools Program, Title V, Part B: Non-Regulatory Guidance, July, 2004.  
Department of Education: USA

NEA Web Site for: Charter Schools: An NEA policy statement adopted by the 2001 Representative Assembly

<https://www.nea.org/charter/neacharterpolicy.html> retrieved 1/31/2008

The Center For Educational Reform Web Site:

<http://www.edreform.com/index.cfm?fuseAction=document&documentID=994>

US Charter Schools Web Site:

[www.uscharterschools.org](http://www.uscharterschools.org)

## **Appendix E: Becoming An Expeditionary Learning School**

**Phases of work to implement the Expeditionary Learning design, a downloadable PDF document.**

<http://www.elschools.org/design/phases.pdf>

**Expeditionary Learning’s approach to implementation, a downloadable PDF document.**

<http://www.elschools.org/design/approach.pdf>

## **Appendix F**

### **Professional Development for Expeditionary Learning Schools**

**To go directly to the web page:**

<http://www.elschools.org/design/profdev.html>

<http://www.elschools.org/design/phase1plan.html>

<http://www.elschools.org/profdev/index.html>

## **Appendix G**

### **Interviews:**

Interview Q’s for Thornton Creek

How long has this been an Expeditionary Learning OB School?  
Since 1997

What was the process of becoming an ELOB school?

1<sup>st</sup> school personnel decided that as an alternative program with no “school model” it was in their best interest to find one they believed in before they were asked to implement a model mandated by the district. So, school personnel were pro-active and found about ELOB at a design fair.

2<sup>nd</sup> a group of teachers visited the ELOB school in Colorado, The Rocky Mountain School.

3<sup>rd</sup> School personnel convinced the school’s site council (PTA) that a partnership with ELOB would be beneficial and PTA agreed to raise the necessary funds and agreed to the partnership.

4<sup>th</sup> A fundraising committee made a long-term commitment to fundraise, which included obtaining short-term grants funds.

What were the start-up costs for becoming an ELOB school? Around 60,000 to start up, and 40,000 for a maintenance contract

Who helped cover these costs?

The site council fundraising, which included a 3-year start up grant.

What was enrollment like the first year?

Enrollment was the same as it had been; the school had been in existence since 1974 as a public alternative school.

How did you recruit the first students?

NA

How was the mission statement developed for this school?

See, process question.

Does this school have a board of directors or equivalent?

PTA called Site Council

What ongoing staff development regarding EL principles is offered?

With a full contract, the school receives 30 days of professional development as well as an onsite design expert assistance. This is the first year that AEII has not have a full contract. The reason the school could not commit to the contract is because the school district took all the professional development days that the school would need to fulfill the contract to implement the new math curriculum.

Who attends the staff development?

Staff, sometimes for OB institutes only a portion of the staff goes, but the OB design expert helps everybody

What, if any, requirements are asked of the school by OB?

The school has to commit to the 30 hours of staff-development. This appears to be one reason that few public schools partner with OB, the district requirements for staff development do not allow for the school to use staff development for ELOB development and are not able to commit to the contract. For AEII, funding was not a problem as the site council was efficient at raising funds.

What are some drawbacks of ELOB?

- Sometimes the school's EL design expert does not have experience with elementary students or schools and is not able to offer relevant, age appropriate examples when assisting the teachers.
- The big time requirement.
- The need for a significant budget to fulfill the contract and extra off-site costs.

What are the benefits of ELOB?

The integration and use of student skills during the project makes the whole experience very meaningful to students. Many students remember their learning expeditions from earlier grades and continue exploring the issues/subject long afterwards.

I asked some students what was their favorite part of the day and many replied that the expedition was their favorite

John finished by saying that if student work was disconnected it loses its importance and purpose.

All the teachers I spoke to agreed that the best thing about partnering with OB was the training, which gave them a common language, common practices and common goals. IN addition, for some teachers training with ELOB helped them articulate why they choose to teach in the ways that they did. They felt that their teaching style was aligned with the ELOB philosophy, but the clear 10 principles from ELOB helped them become clearer about their own philosophy.

When asked what kept the program running smoothly, John replied that both 100% staff buy-in and committed leadership. No program will work without teacher buy-in.

Other schools that are teaching in ways similar to ELOB using project-based learning are Pathfinder, in Seattle, and salmon bay.

From the introductory meeting aimed at parents taking a tour I got the following information: Although this is an ELOB school, which this year they really are not because they do not have a full contract, the district has mandated the use of “everyday mathematics” curriculum, the discovery science curriculum, and the linguistic remedies reading curriculum. Basically the learning expeditions happen in the morning in most classes and are an integrated reading/writing/research experience and depending on the investigation may include social studies, math, science etc. The classroom teacher who loops with the class for 2 years, in grade splits, plans the learning expedition the prior spring and fall before students arrive, in a collaborative effort with other staff members. Most of class learning is collaborative, and students are involved in the assessment process. The school’s behavioral model is based on “the responsive classroom” and follows the book, “The First Six Weeks of School” closely.

The two learning expeditions I had a chance to see were both 4/5 splits. The first was a game called “Making History” the founder was Craig Coss, who has a web site [cossdesigns.com](http://cossdesigns.com). I was amazed with this game; it was incredibly complex and multilayered. The second expedition was in the other 4/5 split, and it was called “Ancient Myths and Creatures” I only had a few minuets in this class before they switched for math. The students seemed similarly engaged and enjoyed the exploration.

## Grammar: What's It Good For?

Lauren Locke

### Rationale

Over the course of this program, I have waffled in a “Delpitesque” manner. I came to the MIT program believing that it was racist and socially unjust to force Standard-English, via teaching grammar conventions, down the throats of students who speak, write, and think in another American-English\* dialectical pattern. During these two years, I came to realize that it is also an injustice for me to deny my students access to Standard-English. Delpit dubs Standard-English the “language of power,” Jesse Jackson calls it, “cash language.” Whatever you call Standard-English, it is one of the keys to higher education, financial upward mobility, and social justice work. Now I reach an impasse.

I can either teach Standard-English grammar as the correct or superior way of speaking and writing, which suggests that many of my students’ home and community dialects are inferior, or I can impede my students’ access to Standard-English and all of the power that comes with it. With these equally disagreeable options as motivators, I set to work researching and creating a grammar curriculum that would teach my students Standard-English conventions, while valuing their ‘born voices.’ It is my hope that through this curriculum my students will come to see Standard-English’s grammatical conventions as: accessible, a malleable part of rich meaning-making experiences, a key to power, and just one form of communication, not hierarchically superior to others.

(\*by “American-English” I mean any English dialect that is spoken in the U.S., including dialects that are an admixture of English and “foreign” languages)

### The Last 50 years of Grammar Teaching

Over the last 50 years, the pendulum has swung with respect to theories on teaching Standard-English grammar. In most U.S. schools, rote memorization was the flavor until the 1950s. This style of grammar teaching, which I will call *traditional*, was influenced by behaviorism, “which emphasized observable behavior, avoidance of errors, and habit formation” (Lee & VanPatten, 1995). This is the curriculum of kill-and-drill: students write sentences with a particular targeted convention, students chorally repeat grammar conventions and parts of speech, students find and correct errors in isolated sentences, etc.

The 1960s ushered in philosophies geared toward more student-centered approaches. Traditional grammar instruction was shunned, as it interfered with a student’s creative writing process. “Sentence combining” became the answer to grammar teaching. Sentence combining is a strategy for teaching grammar in which students combine sentences as a way of moving their writing from simple to more complex (Saddler, 2007).

In the 1980s, the competing tendencies of the non- and pro-grammar camp gave birth to the “grammar wars.” The grammar wars consisted of two adversarial camps of educators: those who believed that grammar should be taught as a discrete set of rules and those who believed that grammar lessons should be imbedded in writing assignments, not taught separately. 1983 produced *A Nation at Risk* and ushered in the standards movement. The standards movement called for a return to sound, evidenced teaching strategies and curriculum. Despite the fact that the National Council of Teachers of English put forth a resolution in 1985 denouncing the teaching of

grammar, traditional grammar, once more, became the darling of the language arts classroom (Doniger, 2003). Under *No Child Left Behind* there is mounting pressure on teachers to teach traditional grammar so that students can respond effectively to standardized writing prompts (Dunn & Lindblom, 2003).

### **Why Traditional Grammar Teaching Doesn't Work**

Krashen (1998) tells us that an approach to grammar which only gives learners a chance to “produce specific grammar structures” does not work because that is not how people actually learn to use those structures. People internalize a grammar structure by having meaning-making experiences in which they employ or observe the grammar structure. Teaching the grammar structure as a discrete rule is an inefficient use of class time. Further, having learners produce structures which they find confusing serves to create a psychoaffective block, in which the learner shuts down to new learning because the learning task has produced anxiety in the learner (Ellis, 1995).

These theories follow from linguistic theory, which informs us that learning a grammar convention has nothing to do with how learners make-meaning in what they hear, say, read, or write (Garrett, 1986). People learn to effectively communicate by having rich meaning-making experiences. The practice of separating meaning-making from grammar, by presenting grammar as a discrete list of rules and conventions, serves to portray learning grammar as an act of futility. In fact, there is no evidence which suggests that traditional grammar instruction helps learners connect with grammar in their writing or to edit what they have written (Kane, 1997). In 2005, the University of York released a study on traditional grammar teaching. This study, which was called the “largest systematic review of research from the past 100 years into the effect of grammar teaching on writing in English-speaking countries for children 5 to 16,” found no evidence that traditional grammar instruction improves students’ writing (Haplin, 2005). The above findings are true for students in general, but what about students who come from communities and families in which Standard-English is not the common dialect (e.g. students of color, English language learners, and students of low-socioeconomic status)?

Traditional grammar teaching tells us that there is a right way of speaking and writing (Standard-English) and there is a wrong way (all other American-English dialects). If students who belong to families and communities which do not speak Standard-English are to learn how to write through traditional grammar teaching, then these students must accept that their way of communicating is inferior. For these students, the linguistic values transformation that occurs under traditional grammar instruction serves to disjoin them from their community and family identities. This disjoint is the goal of an educational system which offers only two options: 1) a static mimicry of the culture of power, or 2) failure. If there were another option, however, a way of teaching grammar that explicitly examined the inequities of our current system, then, perhaps, students could access the language of power without having to sacrifice the worth of their personal & community identities.

### **Where Are We Coming From?**

“...if we teach standardized, handbook grammar as if it is the only ‘correct’ form of grammar, we are teaching in cooperation with a discriminatory power system, one that arbitrarily advocates some language-use conventions as inherently better than others” (Dunn & Lindblom, 2003). To be effective communicators we must understand the affect that audience and intent have on our speaking and writing. Even though Standard-English is the language of gatekeepers, it only

serves certain audiences and purposes. The best writers are those who can tap into multiple voices and can manipulate grammar to meet the specific needs of their communication experience. What an injustice we serve our students if we have them “give attention to one voice at the expense of others” (O’Leary, 2007).

A study by Geneva Smitherman found that when students who spoke African American Vernacular English were encouraged to analyze the conventions of their dialectal patterns, they were more engaged with and competent in learning Standard-English conventions (Dunn & Lindblom, 2003). Dunn and Lindblom (2003) go on to editorialize that if students are encouraged to see their dialect and Standard-English as distinct, yet equally valuable forms of language, then the students will be more likely to engage with Standard-English grammar lessons. This style of grammar instruction does not ask that students trade their dialects, or language identities, for Standard-English. The two language identities live together—one secures access to the community, and the other gains access to power in the dominate culture.

If we, as teachers, believe that language is so static that it can be dichotomized into right and wrong, then we don’t understand what it means to communicate. For the last 40 years, education reform movements have encouraged teachers to value their students’ dialects as different, not inferior, but teachers who vehemently oppose American-English dialects fill the public school system (Labov, 2003). We have no chance of teaching grammar effectively if we enter the classroom stigmatizing our students’ modes of communication.

### **Don’t Mince Words**

Our students live in the world. Those who are victims of linguistic bias are all too aware of the privilege disparities attached to different forms of verbal and written communication. Dunn and Lindblom (2003) recommend teaching the issues of socioeconomic and political bias surrounding grammar. These authors say that students will be more likely to engage with grammar if the social, economic, and political issues attached to linguistic bias are addressed.

Many modern educational theorists believe that if our teaching explicitly addresses the connection between Standard-English and power, then it is possible to teach Standard-English grammar without engendering the inferiority of other American-English dialectics. “Acknowledging a culture of power and its linguistic codes means prefacing grammar instruction with an examination of the ways judgment accompanies usage (proper grammar)” (Ehfenworth & Vinton, 2005). To date, the politics connected to grammar and Standard-English have been divorced from the language arts classroom. The aforementioned research shows that this disconnect between politics and grammar has caused students who speak American-English dialects to eschew learning Standard-English grammar because this learning requires them to subjugate their dialects as inferior. But if our students are encouraged to learn Standard-English grammar, not because it is superior to their dialects, but because, in a biased and racist system, Standard-English gains access to power, then we may see students who are willing to engage.

### **Grammar as Communication**

For the time being, let us put aside the connection between grammar mastery and access to the culture of power. If we take access issues off of the table, then what is the point of learning grammar, or, for that mater, learning how to write at all? The answer: communication. The point of writing is to make-meaning by recording our thoughts, things that we have seen, events that we have imagined, and beliefs that we have come to hold. We write these things down so that they can be communicated to someone, even if that someone is just ourselves. So how does traditional

grammar teaching, with its rules and rote memorization, connect to this idea of communication and meaning-making? It really doesn't. "Communicating effectively is the road to success. Knowing the rules is largely irrelevant to communication. Writers learn to communicate by communicating, not by memorizing rules" (Dunn & Lindblom, 2003). Students must be encouraged to see the grammar conventions as a dynamic part of meaning-making and communication. So how do we get our students to come to see grammar as useful, meaningful, and rich?

Dunn and Lindblom (2003) encourage students to see style and grammar usage as malleable. Right and wrong don't exist as much as context, audience, and purpose. To facilitate their students' exploration of grammar they find a variety of forums and audiences for their students to write for. Dunn and Lindblom (2003) feel that writing for just the teacher-audience pushes students toward writing that is static and safe; whereas, writing for a community organization or an Internet publication encourages students to manipulate and, eventually, own the grammar conventions as they explore different styles for different audiences.

Many educators and researchers have found exploring grammar through literature to be a powerful antidote to traditional grammar teaching (Doniger, 2003; Dunn & Lindblom, 2003; Ehfenworth & Vinton, 2005; Kane, 1997; Peterson, 2000; Spandel, 2004; Weaver, 1996). Teaching grammar through literature serves the dual purpose of showing students the real functionality of grammar and of providing a meaningful context, which students can connect with and internalize. There are a variety of approaches to teaching grammar through literature.

Ehfenworth and Vinton (2005) use short stories with examples of the conventions that they want to teach. The class reads the story together and talks about what the story's conventions *do*. The class discusses what they, as critical readers and editors, could do to change the story by manipulating the grammar. Doniger (2003) has students investigate passages from novels that break the rules. Doniger (2003) gives his students texts in which the authors have abandoned some Standard-English conventions or have written in another American-English dialect. Doniger (2003) has his students explain what is *wrong* with the passage, and then the students suggest what this manipulation of grammar conventions does to affect the story's tone and mood. These are just a few of the ways that educators are using literature to teach grammar as meaningful and malleable, but there are lots of others. The commonality in all of these strategies is that they take grammar out of the realm of static, discrete rules and make it useful and purposeful to meaning-making and communication.

### **Errors are Good**

"Errors...are actually evidence of the writer's thinking, and in some cases, clear indicators of the writer's growth" (Weaver, 1996). Students making mistakes means that they are moving beyond the static and known information, or skills sets, that they already have. They are moving to the outer limit of Vygotsky's zone of proximal development, and they are entering the realm in which new learning can occur. Wormeli, Weaver, Vygotsky, and Anderson all agree that these errors are pure gold for teachers. Consider the error as a window into the student's mind. The student made the grammar choice for a reason. What does the error show us about the student's understanding of colons, for example? If we understand the student's reasoning, then we can begin redirecting her or his understanding of colons.

Aside from how students' errors serve to inform our teaching, they are good because they indicate that a student is curious about and open to new meaning-making experiences. As educators we need to celebrate this. Otherwise, we run the risk of communicating to students that writing is about avoiding errors (Anderson, 2006). When we shift the focus of writing from the

superficial errors to the actual writing quality (i.e. the meaning and ideas that the writing conveys), then we show our students that communication is what is valuable about writing. This classroom shift from superficial to enduring writing qualities has also been found to bolster students' writing achievement on standardized tests (Langer, 2000).

### **Accentuate the Positive**

Since Paul Diederich's study in 1974, we have known that the best way to improve a student's writing is to value what the piece does well (Dunn & Lindblom, 2003). Emphasizing students' grammar errors reinforces a foreign ownership of Standard-English. When your red pen bleeds all over your students' papers, your students are being told that they do not have the right to use *your* language. There are lots of ways to empower your students to own their grammar through positive reinforcement.

Critical feedback is useful, but students have a difficult time responding to feedback that comes without praise. Value what works first; you should say nothing before you have praised some part of the writing (Spandel, 2004). Call your student's attention to the aspects of her or his writing which *are* well crafted. Talk about the more artistic or abstract qualities that she or he is displaying as a writer. After your students feel safe and valued, then you can clue them into the grammar conventions that would make their writing stronger.

Make successes public. When your student has hit on gold, whether it is a paragraph, a sentence, or a phrase, have the student re-record it in his or her writing journal, or, better yet, have the student put the writing on the overhead for the whole class to read (Anderson, 2006). You can strengthen your community of writers even more by using student work to create visual grammar reminders for the room. Neurologist and literary theorists find visual grammar reminders to be very beneficial to student achievement in writing (Anderson, 2006). However, steer clear of non-examples—the focus should be on making-meaning through grammar, not mistakes (Ehrenworth & Vinton, 2005). This discussion about being positive and valuing student work may seem pedestrian and obvious, but I think that it is useful. When assessing writing pieces, teachers often think that valuable feedback is showing students every error that was made, so that they may improve their writing. Budding writers need to be encouraged to find their voices. It won't matter that they have mastered the grammar conventions if they are afraid to write.

### **Assessment of Writing Across the Curriculum**

Writing across the curriculum is a great idea and may serve to strengthen our students' writing, *if* it is executed correctly. The instruction time of every discipline can be broken down into two discrete chunks. The first chunk of time is the place in which the students construct new understandings. This is a time to just deal with the business of learning. The second chunk of time is reserved for students to demonstrate everything that has been learned by creating a product. Products should be produced during both chunks of time, but the products that receive a graded assessment are produced during the second chunk of time. This logic follows from Wormeli, Weaver, and multitudes of other foundational and contemporary educational theorists.

If a student's grammar is to be graded for the Standard-English conventions, then that graded assessment belongs in the final product. If the goal of the learning experience and the product is a new understanding, then assessing and grading a student's grammar will convolute the goal of learning and skew the assessment of the product. Following from my research, this is the advice that I have to offer for would-be-grammar-graders: 1) do not grade for grammar if the goal of the product is a new or advancing understanding; 2) if you are going to grade for grammar, be

explicit about your assessment rubric (e.g. give you students a copy of the rubric and explain the criteria).

## Summary

I hope that I clearly presented the implications of this research. In case I did not, I will say it again: 1) Standard-English is not inherently more valuable or more correct than any other American-English dialect; the value placed upon a dialect is derived from the context of audience and purpose; 2) as Standard-English gains access to power in the dominant culture, and as we are in the business of securing our students' access to power, we must make the learning of Standard-English grammar conventions approachable for and inoffensive to our students; 3) grammar is a malleable part of rich meaning-making experiences, and grammar cannot be effectively taught when it is detached from meaning-making experiences.

This research has been extremely useful to me and has guided my development of a grammar unit. The unit is intended for a high school, but could be adapted for earlier grade levels. The unit begins with a seminar addressing the biases attached to Standard-English and other American-English dialects spoken in the U.S. The unit empowers students to own grammar by having the class: manipulate conventions to change meaning, write for different audiences, and value each other's writing. This unit is a part of a yearlong curriculum focused on moving students from reluctant to empowered, dynamic, competent, and decisive writers. I have some excellent resources for anyone who is interested.

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## **The Danger of Jolly Ranchers: Motivating Students Without Rewards**

Sarah McGreevy

I was recently told a story of a newly-hired, first year, first grade teacher who was asked by a fellow teacher, “How many bags of Jolly Ranchers® will you need this year?” The first year teacher looked at her quizzically, and the teacher continued with, “The first grade team always stocks up on bags of candy at the beginning of school so we can keep the students motivated throughout the year!”

The story is funny if you think about it, and it is all too familiar to educators. Those teachers were preparing to keep their kids motivated in a way they know works. So candy has sugar in it, but that’s not so bad, right? What else could be wrong with rewarding, and yes, occasionally bribing students to behave and get their work done? Well it turns out that there are many reasons why rewarding students in such a way is not such a great idea, whether we’re talking about Jolly Ranchers®, raisins, stickers, tokens, or any other extrinsic reward.

In fact, any outside incentive or reinforcement of a behavior, including both tangible (such as prizes) and verbal rewards (such as praise), is considered extrinsic. Rewards such as these have the potential to actually undermine or de-emphasize a child’s intrinsic motivation, or internal drive based on actual interest (Deci, Koestner & Ryan, 2001).

When educators consider the implementation of such incentive-based systems in the classroom, they often think about the impact the Jolly Rancher®, for instance, has on classroom behavior. Many teachers have accepted the idea that if they do not implement some kind of outside motivator, students will have no natural interest in completing tasks or behaving in an acceptable fashion. Using rewards as incentives is a way to increase the likelihood of getting something done, and it works...at least temporarily. The fact is that incentive plans focusing on extrinsic rewards fail to address the real issues at hand. They act as a kind of quick fix that ignores the root of the problems in the classroom, and when the rewards are discontinued the old behaviors begin again.

### **The Truth about Treats**

It has been found that, in general, students *are* more likely to complete their work or behave well when they know they will get a prize or a treat for doing so. Is this really what we want as educators, for our students to act appropriately and do well so they can get a treat? The obvious answer to this question is “no.” Most teachers I know would cringe at the idea of teaching students to think more about the prize than the learning. Many teachers continue, however, to perpetuate this idea by promoting a seemingly harmless incentive system in their classroom, offering a free day for earning a certain amount of points during the week, or a prize for reading a certain amount of books.

Educators often view rewards as benign tools for classroom management, but according to Alfie Kohn, author of the book, *Punished by Rewards*, rewards act in much the same way as punishments. The assumption that there are two possibilities, punitive or positive, is in fact, a false dichotomy. He states that rewards and punishments are ultimately “two sides of the same coin.” Firstly, rewards have hidden punitive features built in. Like punishments, they are a way that teachers can control students using an incentive to seduce them into learning or doing. Secondly,

with the threat of taking away or somehow withholding the reward, teachers are actually punishing students for not behaving or learning (Kohn, 1993).

Another disturbing feature of rewards is the disruption of positive relationships between the students as well as between the teacher and students. For one thing, it promotes a clear division of status. An imbalance of power is created when there is an undercurrent of “strifes and jealousies,” developed from the unequal distribution of rewards. Pitting people against each other creates a status-based relationship filled with anxiety, discouragement, and lack of autonomy. When students are made to compete with one another to obtain a reward, the anxiety of the activity often interferes with student performance.

Additionally, students are often de-motivated by the competition. They often feel discouraged when they continually lose or fail to obtain the prize, and begin to lose hope that they will ever be able to catch up. Why try if you know you don’t have a chance? These feelings often take away from the real point of behaving or learning, and because of this, students become removed from the activity and attribute winning or losing with chance or factors out of their control. The reward structure in the classroom can significantly warp a student’s relationship with her teacher. Because the teacher is the person in charge of judging and determining whether good or bad things happen to them, students begin to conceal problems, try to impress their teacher, or generally act distrustful.

When a student is offered a reward for completing a task, he sees the activity as something that stands in his way of obtaining the reward. It is human nature to do only what is necessary to get the reward we seek, and because of this, we are less likely to notice peripheral features and become unmotivated to take risks. In order to explore, rise to a challenge, or be creative, we must take risks. When the focus is directed at obtaining a reward, students view the prize as the objective, and do not see the benefit of exploration and taking chances to learn (Kohn, 1993).

According to the Cognitive Evaluation Theory developed by Edward Deci and Richard Ryan, intrinsic motivation is based on innate psychological needs for competence (feeling capable of performing specified tasks) and self-determination (feeling a sense of control over one’s life).

The effects on intrinsic motivation of external events such as the offering of rewards, the delivery of evaluations, the setting of deadlines, and other motivational inputs are a function of how these events influence a person’s perceptions of competence and self-determination (Deci, Koestner & Ryan, 2001).

In other words, when the offered reward infringes on a student’s perception of her own self-determination or competence, it becomes an ineffective mode of long-term motivation. This means that in order for rewards to be perceived as controlling, students must be engaging in the desired behavior only in order to receive the reward. It has been found that verbal rewards, demonstrating explicit positive feedback, can actually increase perceived competence and therefore enhances intrinsic motivation. However, verbal feedback, like tangible rewards, still has the potential to undermine intrinsic motivation when students specifically engage in behavior in order to gain the teacher’s praise.

There is one slight exception to this theory. Administering rewards in an unexpected manner, after students have finished a task, is far less likely to be detrimental to intrinsic motivation. This is because the prize at the end was not the reason for the behavior displayed or the task completed (Deci, Koestner & Ryan, 2001).

## Rethinking Rewards

Because many teachers are steeped in an educational environment where incentives are used widely, it may seem difficult to conceive of how to change their own methods of motivating students. One sixth grade teacher, Jesse Kooyman, has successfully eliminated many of the rewards in her classroom. She believes that the best way to motivate students is to find out what interests the students. She likes to pre-assess students for the subject matter that they like and this helps determine what she is going to focus on and how she is going to teach. She also finds that using a variety of strategies to teach lessons is very important. Visual aids, pictures, and technology all help to get the students involved because “when you personalize the curriculum, students are more interested,” says Kooyman.

Although she has eliminated many of the extrinsic factors in her classroom, there is one motivating factor she cannot get around: grades. She believes grades often inhibit learning because they can become the motivational incentive students and their parents look at to measure their success. To minimize this effect, Kooyman de-emphasizes the importance of grades and tries to instill the value of learning, whether the assignment counts for a grade or not. To more effectively evaluate students, she likes to use rubrics to specifically indicate how the student did on a particular assignment. This allows for self reflection and better understanding of a student’s own work, and is much more helpful than a letter grade for student learning.

## Sweet Solutions

Jesse Kooyman’s practical experience has taught her to motivate students in ways that do not require rewards as incentives, and many of her own suggestions coincide with suggestions made by experts like Alfie Kohn (1993). A list of such suggestions follows:

- Reduce the salience of rewards in the classroom
- If you are to offer rewards, do so after the task has been completed
- Don’t make getting rewards a contest
- Give helpful and specific feedback
- Don’t praise *people*, only what they *do*
- Make praise specific
- Bring students in on the process of change
- Limit the amount of graded assignments
- Never grade: effort, on a curve, or when students are still learning
- Include students in the evaluation process
- Allow for active (exploratory) learning
- Provide reasons for assignments
- Elicit student curiosity
- Set an example
- Allow students to make mistakes
- Allow students to communicate with one another

Kohn proposes the three Cs for creating a motivating learning environment in the classroom: collaboration, content, and choice. He refers to collaboration as students learning together (cooperative learning). By participating in well functioning cooperative groups, students feel more positive about themselves, each other, and the subject they’re studying. Students in cooperative learning groups learn *with* each other as opposed to *against* one another.

Kohn defines content as things worth knowing. He says when teachers can contextualize the material being taught, and provide a variety of meaningful tasks at an appropriate level of difficulty, it makes learning more interesting and students become more involved (Kohl, 1993). One way to support meaningful learning is to incorporate problem and project-based learning which emphasizes learning by doing. This kind of learning instruction is based on setting goals, scaffolding, frequent opportunities for self-assessment, and creating an environment which promotes participation (Barron et al., 1998).

Choice is a way for teachers to help students feel more autonomy in the classroom. Kohn states that students should have a say in what goes on in the classroom and be able to actively participate. One way to achieve more autonomy is to consistently provide opportunities for free time in which students are allowed to read, do homework, write in their journals, or work on projects. Another suggestion is to have students peruse possible books to decide which they would rather read for their next reading assignment (Kohn, 1993). There are many ways that teachers can provide students with choices, while still maintaining a well-managed classroom. The trick is to provide students with equally acceptable options for learning the material.

**On the next page is a chart** with examples showing how teachers might incorporate the 3 Cs into their curriculum in order to provide a classroom environment more conducive to student motivation in the classroom, and no, Jolly Ranchers® are not included.

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[www.teachingtolerance.org](http://www.teachingtolerance.org)

[www.teachervision.com](http://www.teachervision.com)

<http://www.emints.org/ethemes/resources/S00001819.shtml>

February 8, 2008 interview of Jesse Kooyman (6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher at Evergreen Forest Elementary, North Thurston School District).

<i>Collaboration</i>	<i>Content</i>	<i>Choice</i>
<p><b>Utilize Cooperative Learning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student Teams: Teach-Team Study-Test</li> <li>• Jigsaw: Teach-Talk-Team Report-Test (Slavin, 1984)</li> </ul> <p><b>Build Community</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pairs collaborate to make banners with proverbs promoting teamwork</li> <li>• Create a community puzzle with descriptive word on each piece</li> <li>• Create and share identity cubes with pictures and words describing individuals</li> <li>• For these activities and free resources go to <a href="http://www.teachingtolerence.org">www.teachingtolerence.org</a></li> <li>• More great ideas are available at <a href="http://www.emint.org/ethemes/S00001819.shtml">www.emint.org/ethemes/S00001819.shtml</a></li> </ul>	<p><b>Understand Student Interests</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Survey students about likes/dislikes and how they learn best</li> <li>• Incorporate multiple modes of learning</li> <li>• Incorporate technology like PowerPoint and Computers</li> <li>• Use Problem/Project-Based Learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Set learning-appropriate goals</li> <li>2) Scaffold</li> <li>3) Frequent self-assessment and revision</li> <li>4) Social organization that promotes participation</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Examples of Problem/Project Based Lessons</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jasper Challenge Programs-adventure videos that pose questions &amp; guide students in solving problems</li> <li>• Project based lessons such as: Design a chair-use graph paper to draw blueprints &amp; label measurements (Barron, et al, 1998)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Encourage Student Participation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give students free time in which they get to choose an appropriate activity</li> <li>• Ask for student input about preferences</li> <li>• Let students self select their reading material</li> <li>• Give multiple options for activity choices (Kohn, 1993)</li> </ul> <p><b>Include Students in Their Own Assessment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Let them come up with activity requirements</li> <li>• Have students self reflect-survey, journal, discussion, rubric</li> <li>• Allow students to redo or modify their work to learn from mistakes</li> <li>• Go to <a href="http://www.teachervision.com">www.teachervision.com</a> for more tips on about increasing student autonomy by offering choices.</li> </ul>

## **Managing E/BD**

Connie Monaghan

### **Introduction**

While there are behavior problems found in any classroom for any age student, behavior problems in special education classes can be especially pronounced. Children who have struggled and/or failed throughout their school careers due to learning disabilities, emotional/behavior disorders (E/BD), or both often exhibit low self-esteem and lessened ideas of their own self-efficacy. By middle school they may have given up on success; they may have adopted an identity that doesn't mesh with the ideals of school; they may, in fact, resent school, teachers, and the idea of education as a positive goal. Negative behaviors may serve these students in several ways: to gain attention, to avoid class work, or to escape the class entirely. Students having behavior disabilities such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, oppositional defiant disorder, or conduct disorder need specific strategies in managing their behaviors in order to be successful.

The purpose of my research was to discover behavior management best practice both in theory and as it plays out in the reality of the classroom. In pursuit of that goal I interviewed numerous classroom teachers, psychologists, and paraeducators; observed in a self-contained classroom for middle-school students with emotional/behavior disorders, and at a public school whose sole mission is to serve such students of all ages. I also researched journal articles.

By learning how extreme behavior problems are managed, I also hoped to learn how to handle lesser problems in the classroom. As a special education teacher I'll most likely be facing both on a daily basis, and would like to have as many effective tools as I can gather.

### **Rationale**

There's no question in my mind that I was in search of a magic bullet – a simple approach to behavior management that would work the first time, that would easily solve behavior problems of all types, and that would also work in every situation. I also knew that this was a rather ridiculous quest but that I'd find answers of some sort along the way. While, according to one source (Jones, Nakanishi, Brockney-Abbot & Dillon, 1998), more than 30% of new teachers quit within the first five years primarily due to frustrations with student discipline, 70% don't. They have found behavior-management methods that work for them.

My research focused on extreme behaviors, with the thinking that what works for these students and teachers would surely be applicable to less severe situations. In part, I was correct, although I had it rather backwards. Behavior management as seen in a general education classroom simply becomes more extreme as the behaviors become more extreme. In other words, the methods used at, say, Park Avenue School in Tacoma – a school that houses only children with severe behavior problems – are far stricter and far more behaviorist than would be necessary in a general education class. As behavior problems escalate, so do strategic responses.

While students without behavior disorders may respond to logic, conflict resolution, mild consequences, their own conscience, etc., students with emotional/behavioral disorders may not. They are often impulsive and don't learn from their own mistakes. Particular consequences, such as making the teacher angry or gaining the negative attention of the entire class, may actually appeal to them. Therefore, discovering means of teaching these students to manage their behaviors is of utmost importance in seeing them succeed.

## Findings

### Best Practice Strategies

Because students with IEPs are placed in the least restrictive environment in which they can function successfully, severe behaviors may often be seen in the general education classroom, including inattention, disruption, disrespect, and an inability to follow directions. Supon and Kimberly (1998) interviewed 20 therapeutic staff members over two years in order to determine successful methods in the general education classroom of dealing with children who had been identified by a clinical psychologist as having severe behavior problems.

According to the article (Supon & Kimberly, 1998), the teacher should, first, inform herself about the student's specific goals, objectives and other information documented in the IEP, including medications, educational and social/emotional needs. Second, a curriculum that features opportunities for success while emphasizing skill development is important. Teaching strategies should include re-teaching, an ability to adapt and change, and a variety of teaching techniques.

Tangible rewards such as incentive charts (the student might chart his own progress in, say, meeting behavior goals), stickers and other extrinsically motivating items should be offered, as well as positive verbal reinforcement of effort rather than achievement. "Certainty of reward is critical for continuation of progress." (Supon & Kimberly, 1998)

The authors (Supon & Kimberly, 1998) go on to suggest strategies frequently cited as current best practice by numerous textbooks and journal articles: constructivist teaching methods, making work relevant to students' interests, consistency, clear expectations, a quiet classroom, and "high-stimulation learning environments grounded in what [students] enjoy and can succeed in."

A program of "positive discipline" was designed by Mellie Cope and Sally Hundley for a North Carolina middle school in 1992, ultimately earning them national recognition (Strahan, Cope, Hundley & Faircloth, 2005). They based their program on research findings that showed successful teachers to have a strong personal knowledge of their students and involve them in classroom decisions as well as offering assignments that include inquiry and collaboration. Positive discipline was seen as an important element in connecting students to school via caring relationships with teachers.

Strahan, Cope, Hundley & Faircloth (2005) found that successful teachers: were well-prepared their classroom setups and lesson plans; designed their curriculum and classroom layouts to lessen disruptions and maintain academic momentum; reflected on their goals for teaching self-discipline; responded to disruptions as teachable moments; helped students reflect on their decision-making process and learn from mistakes; and modeled a caring attitude. "By asking students to reflect on their decisions, plan and carry out corrections, make commitments, and discuss what they have learned, teachers simultaneously hold students accountable and reinforce positive relationships."

Cope and Hundley suggested treating students as adults (because they often fill that role at home); offering a discipline plan that doesn't focus on minor infractions such as chewing gum; and creating a sense of community through reflective writing assignments and empathetic perspective-taking (Strahan, Cope, Hundley & Faircloth, 2005). In their experimental program, the teaching team instituted a morning-meeting routine in which they discussed hypothetical situations related to behavior, and held classroom conversations about disciplinary situations. They examined decision-making processes seen in novels, for example, and integrated positive discipline into their curriculum.

Unlike other programs, rewards, such as going outside or having a party, were spontaneous, and didn't include a point system or behavior charting. "In this way they reinforced accountability without shifting students' focus to extrinsic motivation." (Strahan, Cope, Hundley & Faircloth, 2005)

In dealing with behavior problems, Cope and Hundley (Strahan, Cope, Hundley & Faircloth, 2005) presented students with guided reflections that included the following four questions:

- Do you agree that we live in an imperfect world where mistakes are made?
- Who is responsible for this situation?
- What could you have done that would have been worse?
- What have you learned from this situation?

Numerous research papers cite student reflection, offering choices, reinforcing a student's responsibility for her own behavior, clear communication, high expectations, and a positive teacher outlook as important elements of behavior management (Eric Development Team, 1998; Jones, Nakanishi, Brockney-Abbot & Dillon, 1998; Marshall, 2005; Obenchain & Taylor, 2005; Strahan, Cope, Hundley & Faircloth, 2005; Supon & Rowe, 1998). Other commonly recommended practices include: asking questions of the student rather than telling him what to do; avoiding power struggles; using humor to defuse a situation; teaching students positive self-talk; planned ignoring; and intermittent rather than continuous positive reinforcement of behaviors.

One finding that came as an illuminating surprise was the concept of "escape conditioning," in which the strategy of removing a disruptive student from class backfires, reinforcing rather than lessening the problem. The student has only learned that he can escape at will through his bad behavior. Putting the student out of class is also a positive reinforcer for the teacher, who then has a quiet class. The solution, according to Obenchain and Taylor (2005) is to do a functional behavior analysis: pay attention to what the student is reacting to, and what the payoff for his bad behavior is, then modify that situation. (See Resources page for functional behavior analysis web sites.)

## **Observations And Interviews**

The HOPE Program, Reeves Middle School, Olympia

Mary Crooks is the teacher in the HOPE (Help Our People Excel) Program, a self-contained E/BD class. This is the middle-school program for the entire Olympia School District, and generally contains only 3-8 students. (Leaving us to surmise that there are a great many students with behavior problems in the general education population.) Art therapist Alana Laliberte works fulltime with the program.

Both women emphasize having a positive relationship with students as being vitally important. "Build up mutual respect," Ms. Crooks says, "so they want to work for you." Ms. Crooks follows the recommendations of *Teaching With Love and Logic* (Fay & Funk, 1995), but says, "Whatever works!" meaning no system is totally relied on. She stresses that support from administration and co-workers is significant in running a successful program.

Ms. Laliberte uses art therapy as an assessment tool, and the students always have the option of retreating to her office if they need to talk. It's also where they're taken "if they're building up." Play therapy gets the kids talking, she says, "about deeper issues, and they're less on-guard." She uses games to assess frustration and tolerance levels, and looks for indicators of low self-esteem and depression.

Both use Lifespace Crisis Intervention techniques (also used by the Clover Park School District), which call for building self-esteem, building students' social skills, refocusing misplaced aggression, and using verbal de-escalation before having to restrain a child.

The HOPE Program employs a points system through which students can earn their way into general education classes, and eventually back to their home school. They also earn privileges such as eating in the lunchroom, using a school locker, and gaining extra free time. There are six graduated steps to earning transition, based on a percentage of positive point scores.

Each day includes class periods in reading, writing, math, PE, social skills/art, and science. There is time for makeup work, and students also are granted free time when they are done with their work. Students receive 0-3 points for each period of the day in a number of categories, such as "On time and prepared," "Follows directions," and anything specific to their IEP goals, such as "Raises hand before speaking."

The data are collected daily and weekly and kept in a binder for each student. At the end of each week, the student charts his progress. For every respectful day the student has, he puts a bead in a group jar, and once a month there is a raffle for a \$10 gift certificate from the beads in the jar.

Ms. Crooks's demeanor in the classroom is friendly and calm but also businesslike. She is encouraging, offers plenty of praise, and listens to the kids, who clearly trust her. Her lessons are often hands-on and engaging, and the students frequently work together to read textbooks and finish worksheets.

#### Park Avenue School, Tacoma

This is Tacoma's school for students with severe behavioral and emotional problems who have failed in less restrictive settings. There are students from age 3 to high school, 60 students total. The majority of the kids are white and male.

Teacher Leslie Cummings-Lindenbach introduced me to the school and hosted me in her classroom of five male 10th-graders, who stayed with her throughout the day except for math and gym. Each student was awarded a plus or minus per each 5-minute interval in such categories as "profanity," "out of seat/area," and "instigating a peer." Bonus points were given for "work completion" and "appropriate cooperation with peers." Students earned additional points for consistent on-task behavior. As in Ms. Crooks's class, students could earn their way back to a general education setting, and could use their points to purchase items in the classroom store. For particularly egregious behavior, students were sent to a desk in the hall to work; if the behavior persisted, the younger kids were put in the time-out room (a large structure in each room), while the older kids had the option of going into time-out or leaving school. Bad behavior might also earn older kids a day in "support," which meant spending the next day in another location chosen by the teacher, and doing an extra load of bookwork, with privileges such as going to the cafeteria taken away. According to the teachers, time was split about 50/50 between teaching and managing behavior (including the task of keeping track of points and taking notes on the students' demeanor).

Other teachers I visited, however, varied their use of the points system. Ms. Cummings explained, "We all use the point system, but *how* we use it differs between classrooms and even students. We all do classic 'shaping' using point sheets, where we can reward positive behaviors with points while extinguishing negative ones by withdrawing points. With the science is the art, where we try to maintain the student's 'buy-in' of the whole points concept, so each classroom differs in values applied to specific behaviors." *Teaching With Love and Logic* (Fay & Funk, 1995) was cited by her and other teachers as the basis of their management styles. "With *Love and*

*Logic*, students build their skills in solving their own problems, not just reacting to what happens to them.”

### **Reflections/Connections**

It was evident during observations that most of the methods outlined in the section on journal research are accepted as best practice, as many were mentioned by teachers, such as being positive, getting to know the kids, and offering rewards. It was also clear from observations and interviews (many not mentioned in this paper due to lack of space) that teachers will find what methods work best for them based on best practice and experience.

Ms. Crooks’s class seemed to embody the best of both teaching and behavior management. Between her and Ms. Laliberte, the students had consistent personal support plus interesting lessons, as they also learned to manage their behavior. The teachers at Park Avenue School, on the other hand, showed a range of tolerance for various behaviors: while one teacher kept strict rules and a quiet room, another classroom was chaotic. In a class for primary students, I saw warmth and interesting teaching; in the classes for older students, I saw students mostly doing worksheets, and I heard little praise. A single visit, though, can hardly tell the whole story.

### **Recommendations**

I found no silver bullet, but I do recommend *Teaching With Love and Logic* (Fay & Funk, 1995), as its methods empower students to think and take responsibility for their own choices. Behavior management is seen as being about the student’s decisions rather than being centered on the teacher’s emotional responses and disciplinary reactions.

### **Functional Behavior Analysis Resources for Teachers**

Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice

[Air.org/cecp/fba/problembehavior2/direct2.htm](http://Air.org/cecp/fba/problembehavior2/direct2.htm)

Colorado Department of Education

[Cde.state.co.us/cdesped/fbafaq.asp](http://Cde.state.co.us/cdesped/fbafaq.asp)

Multimodal Functional Behavioral Assessment

[Mfba.net/](http://Mfba.net/)

NYU Child Study Center

[Aboutourkids.org/aboutour/letter/novdec02.pdf](http://Aboutourkids.org/aboutour/letter/novdec02.pdf)

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## Second Language Acquisition

Leah Montange

Teachers of English Language Learners (ELLs) can benefit greatly from gaining an understanding of how people acquire second (or third, fourth, etc.) languages. Many general education teachers are faced with the challenge of teaching students who do not speak English fluently and are left with many questions: What should I reasonably expect from my ELL students? How can I structure my classroom, instruction, and assessments to best meet the needs of my English Language Learners? A basic understanding of second language acquisition theory, as well as information about the second language acquisition developmental process, can provide us with some answers to these questions.

In this paper, I will first attempt to draw a quick sketch of the second language acquisition process, based on accounts of applied linguistics and second language acquisition research. I will then introduce the four major schools of thought in second language acquisition theory, as I see them, and discuss some of the ways these theories interact with each other. I will attempt to draw these theories together in a way that makes sense, and then outline some implications and recommendations for classroom teachers. The information that I draw from comes from teacher education, speech pathology, applied linguistics, and linguistics textbooks.

In this paper, the terms language acquisition and language learning are used interchangeably, except in the section describing Stephen Krashen's five hypotheses, because this theorist draws a distinction between the two terms. L1 refers to a learner's first language while L2 refers to the learner's second language. A target language is the language that the learner is in the process of acquiring (usually the L2), while a target-deviant language or error is language that is target-like but differs from the target in grammar, syntax, pronunciation, pragmatics, or word use. Interlanguage refers to variety of rule-governed target-deviant languages that the learner speaks while in the process of acquiring a second language.

What Does Second Language Acquisition Look Like?

People do not "soak up" a new language over night. It is actually a long developmental process with multiple stages (Genesee, Paradis, & Crago, 2004). These stages are surprisingly consistent in order, although it takes different people different amounts of time to progress through these stages, some learners skip some of the stages, and some people may not ever achieve native-like fluency in their second language. The stages of development are: 1) use of L1 2) silent period 3) use of formulaic language 4) use of productive interlanguage 5) native-like fluency in L2 (Genesee et al., 2004).

It is highly disputed whether or not there is critical age when people are best able to acquire a second language (Brown, 2000; Genesee, 2004; Mitchell & Myles, 1998). Adult second language learners very rarely are able to acquire a native-like accent, but research about adult versus child acquisition of second language has otherwise yielded very mixed results about whether such a critical age exists (Brown, 2000). There has also been considerable effort to research the correlations between personality, context, motivation, and other factors that may contribute to L2 learner's success, but much of this research is inconclusive because of the difficulty of isolating and analyzing these factors (Genesee et al., 2004; Mitchell & Myles, 1998). Social factors, such as learner's membership in a minority social group, structural inequality,

cultural expectations, and power relations also may impact learner's second language acquisition (Genesee et al., 2004; Mitchell & Myles, 1998).

Theories of Language Acquisition:

There are four main schools of thought in second language acquisition theory. The first school could be called innatist. It approaches language acquisition from the perspective of linguistics, and takes as a basic hypothesis that all human beings inherit a universal set of principles and parameters which control the shape human language can take, enabling humans to quickly and systematically learn complex languages (Mitchell & Myles, 1998). Noam Chomsky called this innate capacity for language in humans "Universal Grammar" (Mitchell & Myles, 1998). This view is supported by the fact that natural human languages are extremely complex and yet the vast majority of humans are able to learn languages in their early childhood. Furthermore, when humans first learn a language there is an innate order that they acquire grammatical structures and syntax (Krashen, 1982; Mitchell & Myles, 1998).

For second language acquisition, the role of Universal Grammar is not at all settled, and people are still debating whether and to what extent second language learners, who are cognitively mature and already know their primary language, have access to Universal Grammar. They may have no access, full access, indirect access through their L1, or partial access to some of the elements of the Universal Grammar (Mitchell & Myles, 1998). Theorists in the innatist approach do not take a position on how we learn second languages if we do not have full access to Universal Grammar. However, it is clear that most second language learners learn at least some of grammatical structures of their second language in a consistent order.

Drawbacks to the Innatist approach include that it focuses almost entirely on grammar, grammatical morphemes, and syntax of the language, leaving the learner's acquisition of semantics, pragmatics, and discourse unaccounted for. Furthermore, the Innatist position does not account for social, cultural, or psychological aspects of learning. Indeed the learner and his or her context are entirely absent from Universal Grammar theories, and the learner is merely a receptacle for the language generating structure.

The second major school of thought in second language acquisition theory focuses on the role of input and interaction in language acquisition. Input and interaction theories do not attempt to explain the mechanisms for learning or acquiring language, and may even rely on innatist notions such as a "language acquisition device." Instead, they attempt to explain how the appropriate conditions for language learning can cause people to acquire a new language.

Stephen Krashen developed five hypotheses for how we acquire language:

- 1) Acquisition-Learning Distinction, which states that acquisition is a subconscious process of natural or informal learning in which the subject gets a feel for a language, whereas learning is an explicit process of knowing about the grammar and rules of a language (Krashen, 1982).
- 2) Natural Order Hypothesis states that grammatical structures are acquired in a predictable order, and that there are similar developmental errors that occur as the language learner acquires new structures (Krashen, 1982).
- 3) Monitor Hypothesis states that we have a language monitor that helps us edit ourselves to make sure that we are following the formal/explicit rules that we have learned. The monitor allows us to perform correctly using rules that aren't yet acquired but it is of limited usefulness because it only really helps in a grammar test situation when we are focusing on rules. Otherwise we rely on structures we have acquired. Acquisition is essential and learning is peripheral (Krashen, 1982).

- 4) Input Hypothesis states that we acquire language through comprehensible input, and we acquire a new structure when we understand language containing that structure. We figure out what that piece of language means and as a consequence acquire a new structure. Speaking fluency emerges over time on its own through exposure to comprehensible input, and production is not taught directly (Krashen, 1982).
- 5) Affective Filter Hypothesis states that there is an affective filter that facilitates or hinders comprehensible input's delivery on the basis of the brain's language acquisition device (similar to Universal Grammar). This affective filter is made of the learner's motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety level (Krashen, 1982).

Taken together, Krashen's five hypotheses are one of the first comprehensive theories of second language acquisition, and suggest a number of pedagogical practices, such as providing plentiful L2 input in language classrooms, and focusing on whole language or natural language instruction rather than teaching grammar rules. However, Krashen's hypotheses have been critiqued for making sweeping generalizations, for oversimplifying the language acquisition process, and for underestimating the conscious involvement of the learner (Brown, 2000). Furthermore, the concept of comprehensible input has been critiqued because it is nearly impossible to determine whether a particular piece of language is at the next appropriate level of input (comprehensible + 1) for an individual student (Brown, 2000; Mitchell & Myles, 1998).

Michael Long expanded Krashen's theory of comprehensible input into the Interaction Hypothesis, which states that comprehensible input is the result of modified interactions (Brown, 2000; Mitchell & Myers, 1998). That is, language learners adjust the input that they receive to be the best, comprehensible input that they will need to move forward in their learning, through interaction. Other theorists, such as Swain and Lapkin, have put forward the Comprehensible Output Hypothesis, which states that output serves just as important a role as input, because it generates appropriate input (Brown, 2000). Under these theories, grammatical structures and vocabulary are developed through conversation and interactive communication.

Interaction enables the learner to guide input to be comprehensible. Interaction also enables the learner to focus on grammatical forms as he or she produces language, and this attention paid to productive grammar enables acquisition – it turns the input into intake. Long studied interactions between language learners to categorize the interaction strategies that they used, such as negotiating meaning through the use of comprehension checks and clarification requests (Mitchell & Myles, 1998). In general, Long's and Swain and Lapkin's theoretical contributions modify Krashen's comprehensible input theory to account for the learner's effort, as well as the role of the learning context, in the language learning process. Although applied linguistics research tends to support interaction theories, this research is mostly situated in Western cultural settings, and it is possible that the language acquisition process happens differently in different places throughout the world (Mitchell & Myles, 1998).

The third major school of thought in second language acquisition theory is the cognitive psychology perspective, which looks at the mechanisms of learning to determine how we acquire a second language. Cognitive psychology approaches all take as a hypothesis that we learn a second language the same way that we learn any other complex system. Whereas the innatist SLA theories approaches language acquisition as almost mechanistic and focuses on language with the learner as a receptacle for language, cognitive psychology theories focus on the individual learner and his or her process for acquiring a second language. The main theories that I want to cover in the cognitive psychology school of thought are information processing and connectionism.

McLaughlin's Attention Processing Model identifies two information processing mechanisms, controlled and automatic (Brown, 2000). Controlled processing enables the learner to complete a singled out skill or task, and is roughly equivalent to declarative knowledge, or "knowledge that." Automatic processing enables the learner to complete complex tasks quickly, and is roughly equivalent to procedural knowledge, or "knowledge how". Learning a piece of information or skill means shifting it from controlled processing to automatic processing in the learner's mind (Mitchell & Myers, 1998, 86). Under McLaughlin's model, languages are complex skills or processes that can be broken down into simpler subunit skills and processes.

Learning a second language is like learning any other complex skill or process: we first learn simpler subunit skills through the controlled information processing mechanism. Through practice and time, subunit skills are automatized, or move to automatic processing. As they are automatized, they are restructured and incorporated into complex skills in the learner's mind (Brown, 2000; Mitchell & Myles, 1998). McLaughlin also identifies two categories of attention (focused and peripheral), both of which are conscious states, in response to Krashen's division between learning, which is conscious, and acquisition, which is subconscious (Brown, 2000). This model grants the learner an active role in internalizing and restructuring language. It also has strong explanatory power with reference to the phenomenon of language fossilization, which is explained as the automatization of a target-deviant rule.

Another important strain in the cognitive psychology school of thought is the connectionist approaches to second language acquisition. Connectionist approaches draw a parallel between the way humans learn and the way computers develop networks, through complex clusters of links or connections between information nodes. Through repeated activation or de-activation of these connections, patterns become strengthened and learning occurs (Mitchell & Myers, 1998, 79).

In the connectionist approach, language learning does not involve the explicit learning and internalization of rules. Instead, languages are learned through repeated association between bits of information (Mitchell & Myles, 1998). This position is vastly different from other approaches to language acquisition, which all assume that languages are rule-based. However, considering that natural languages are so complex that any attempt to figure out the rules of a given language is incomplete, and that the rules are often ridden with exceptions, the connectionist approach gains some appeal.

Connectionist researchers, such as Sokolik and Smith and N. Ellis and Schmidt have supported the connectionist approach by creating computer models that resemble connectionist-type networks (Mitchell & Myles, 1998). These models were successfully able to "learn" linguistic rules such as noun gender assignment in French and plural morphology in an artificial language through strengthening associative connections (Mitchell & Myles, 1998). Although these computer models were very controlled and limited in scope, they demonstrated that connectionist networks were sufficient to explain the acquisition of certain simple "rules" without explicitly instruction or articulation of those rules (Mitchell & Myers, 1998, 83).

While many cognitive psychology approaches carry great value in sufficiently and simply explaining many phenomena in language acquisition, and in giving credit to the active role of the language learner, these theories do not tend to focus on the learner's social context or the essentially social nature of learning. The fourth school of thought in language acquisition theory emphasizes the essentially social nature of learning and language. This school of thought includes both the application of Vygotskian sociocultural learning theory to language acquisition, and the sociolinguistic approach to studying how social context impacts language learning. is sociocultural/sociolinguistic.

For sociocultural language acquisition theorists, interaction is not just an opportunity for input and negotiating meaning, but is central to learning, which is an essentially social process. Just as is the case in cognitive psychologist theories, sociocultural language learning theorists consider language learning to occur through the same learning mechanisms as any other complex system. For Vygotsky, learning takes place when the learner is confronted with information and skills within their Zone of Proximal Development, through the mediation of a more-capable-peer. Learning is always mediated by physical or symbolic means, usually language (Mitchell & Myles, 1998, 145). For younger or unskilled learners, other-regulation, or the input of a more capable peer, is essential for accomplishing tasks or activities (for older or more skilled learners, self-regulation is important). Learning occurs when the learner has appropriated the knowledge and skills so that they can accomplish tasks and activities on their own. The concept of appropriation is parallel with the concept of automatization in McLaughlin's Attention Processing Model. Research and theory in the sociocultural approach to language acquisition has mainly focused on studying second language acquisition classrooms or situations and applying concepts such as other-regulation, self-regulation (through private speech), and automatization in order to study how these theoretical concepts play out (Mitchell & Myers, 1998).

The sociolinguistic strain of research is relatively new and is based mostly on quantitative studies that detail the impact of social context on language acquisition. Sociolinguistic theories of second language acquisition have little to say about the mechanisms of second language learning, but instead speak to dimensions of social context that impact the learner's social identity, emotion, and ability to learn, a concept loosely parallel to Krashen's theoretical construct of the Affective Filter. Some sociolinguistic researchers focus on investigating the ethnography of L2 communication by studying the role of language in structuring individual and social identity. From this perspective, the goal of L2 learning would be successful participation in speech events, instead of the acquisition of linguistic rules (Mitchell & Myles, 1998).

Social identity is "the part of an individual's self concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership to a social group (or groups) together with the emotional significance attached to that membership" (Tajfel 1974, 69 qtd in Mitchell & Myles, 1998, 168). Language, identity, and context interact to create a dynamic and shifting social identity for the language learner. Social identity is negotiated through language (Mitchell & Myles, 1998, 169). Motivation, opportunities to speak L2, and attitudes toward L2 change as the learner's social identity changes. Threats to self-image or social identity can be coped with in numerous ways, including through seeking further interaction in L2, or choosing to not-learn L2 (Mitchell & Myles, 1998, 170). Opportunities to learn a language are socially patterned, imbued with power relations, cultural expectations, and social meanings. In the sociolinguistic approach to second language acquisition, these social patterns are seen as centrally important factors in the learner's ability to acquire a second language.

### **Synthesis of Second Language Acquisition Theories**

In my own theory of language acquisition, I expand from Krashen's model to incorporate Vygostkian/sociocultural notions of the learning process, information processing theory of how we internalize or automatize linguistic structures, sociolinguistic research about factors that influence the affective filter, and Long's extension of comprehensible input to include interaction. See Appendix A for a full illustration of this synthesized language acquisition theory. My attempt to synthesize other theories into a unified theory of second language acquisition is admittedly rough and untutored, but it is meant only to inform and shape my own teaching practice, and not to stand

up to the critiques of scholars in linguistics, applied linguistics, sociolinguistics, or cognitive psychology fields.

## **Implications and Recommendations for Teachers**

### *Social Context/Affective Filter*

- Build motivation and lower the affective filter by creating activities where all students can succeed, where students can have fun, and where diverse learning styles are addressed
- Use Culturally relevant teaching to support student's home culture, create an additive bilingual environment, lower students' affective filters
- Explicitly encourage and value heritage language and culture.
- Allow student choice through reading workshop, writing workshop to build motivation, ownership of learning, positive sociocultural environment

### *Interaction/Input/Output*

- Guided oral practice, such as chants or formulaic language, to scaffold acquisition of new language structures and vocabulary.
- Create opportunity for interaction using L2 through problem solving activities, discussions, and team tasks.
- Create many varied opportunities for reading and writing using L2.
- Use a highly contextual language environment.
- Use heterogenous language grouping, keeping in mind that if there are only two or three members of a minority language group, they will benefit from being grouped together, along with majority language students.

### *Developmentally Appropriate*

- When students have first arrived, expect a silent period. Place students with students their age group instead of a lower grade.
- Adjust expectations about speed of acquisition. We can't expect ELL's to be academically proficient in English even if they can speak fluently – it takes time. It is far more effective to have students in programs where they can continue to develop their L1 alongside their L2. L1 learning does not interfere with or detract from L2 learning.
- Consider interlanguage and target-deviant errors to be normal. Students incrementally develop L2. They acquire new and increasingly sophisticated grammatical structures as they are developmentally ready. Mistakes are not due to laziness, they are expected.
- Do not correct grammar except when trying to create a polished finished product.
- Remember, teacher corrections do not have a positive effect on language learning unless the student is at just the right point in their development, so this is not a matter of holding our students in low expectations. Use positive modeling instead of correction.

### *Other Important Instructional Strategies*

- Scaffold student learning with graphic organizers, formulas, color coding vocabulary words.
- Use integrated units of study to build context
- Identify core academic vocabulary to explicitly teach in each unit of study, and make sure that it is posted and used.

### *Assessment and Testing*

- Assessments of content knowledge in their L2 will be more difficult for students than in their L1.
- Some appropriate accommodations might be: don't count spelling/grammar in an in-class writing assignment, and give students the opportunity to have their written work edited by someone else for formal papers.
- Read test questions to students, and provide illustrations with test questions

### **Conclusion**

In closing, my final recommendation to teachers who are working with English Language Learners is to recognize the resilience of our students, as well as the enormity of the task before them. Remember that students who are coming to school from a marginalized or immigrant community and are learning a second language are also learning a second culture, and be sensitive to this learning process. Recognize both the social/cultural challenges facing our students and the linguistic/academic ones, as well as the relationships between these challenges. And realize that when English Language Learners do learn English, it is due to their effort to a much higher degree than it is due to our efforts as teachers.

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## Appendix : Montagne Model of Second Language Acquisition

Learner's Context: Additive or subtractive bilingual environment  
 Majority language or minority language group membership  
 Motivation  
 Personality (extroverted, introverted, risk-taking, empathetic)

Classroom Context: Teaching style vs. Learning style  
 Does the class value the heritage language?  
 Power relations between teacher, administration, family, and student

Learner's Background: Exposure to schooling  
 Years of exposure to L2  
 Linguistic community that she/he lives in

Input & Output: Provides material for building neural associations, automatization, or appropriation  
 Comes from a variety of contexts  
 Involves negotiating meaning  
 Other-regulation, zone of proximal development

Passes through

Affective Filter/Social Identity

To become fodder

Language Learning Mechanism:  
 could be, at least partially the Universal Grammar,  
 or could resemble an information processing model,

Productive Language Output:  
 Approaching target language  
 Constructing and influencing the learner's social identity

## **Gramma-Rama**

Joyce Norwood

### **Rationale**

I chose a project based on grammar instruction in order to improve my ability to teach grammar and address a few of the common mistakes I found students often made at the secondary level. In developing this portfolio, I thought about my own past experience as an undergraduate at the University of Washington and realized my grammar usage was rarely corrected. I then thought back even further about my public school experience with grammar. Although my grammar was corrected, I was expected to make changes in my writing without reviewing the grammar rules of the mistakes I was correcting. I had earlier been taught that grammar was a system of rules which should never be broken, but these same rules were rarely reinforced in actual writing assessments once I left public school. Today I feel my past work was graded for such skills as content, supportive details, organization, accuracy, and use of relevant information over such skills as punctuation and grammar usage. I believe this may be the case for many students. By not reinforcing grammar usage, students may later find themselves at a loss when trying to effectively communicate. Rodger Angell, in his forward to the 1999 edition of “The Elements of Style” observes that:

Writing is hard, even for authors who do it all the time. Less frequent practitioners—the job applicant; the business executive with an annual report to get out; the high school senior with a Faulkner assignment; the graduate-school student with her thesis proposal; the writer of a letter of condolences—often get stuck in an awkward passage of find a muddle on their screens, and then blame themselves. (p. ix)

The Washington State Learning Requirements includes a section on grammar usage in which each student “knows and applies writing conventions appropriate for the grade level (Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, 2005).” One of the problems I found was that each section also requires that each student “applies usage rules from previous grades (Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, 2005).” To ensure that students retain what they have previously learned, it is incumbent upon the teacher not only to reinforce prior knowledge, but also catch those students who may not have mastered skills from the previous grade. The goal of this portfolio is to take a few of the most common errors and create differential instruction techniques that will aid teachers in reinforcing grammar usage and simultaneously strengthen my skills to effectively teach.

### **Grammar as Power**

The history of teaching grammar can be a volatile subject and often the rules are used to wound or shame those who do not adhere to the rules. Traditional grammar, which will be explained further, seldom takes into account what a student already knows about effective communication. Most students gain their knowledge of syntax before they begin school and after beginning school their prior knowledge is often readjusted to conform to traditional grammar standards (Shuster, 2003). Grammar is also infused with a cultural component in that the rules rarely take into account cultural differences in communication. One example of the power of traditional grammar has to wound comes from “African American Literacies Unleashed” (Ball & Lardner, 2005), a book that explores the power dynamics involved in teaching traditional grammar to speakers of African American Vernacular English (AAVE). One of the authors (an African American) writes of a time when a professor closed a glowing letter of recommendation

by alerting potential employers of her need to gain a clearer and more articulate command of Standard English. The author had successfully negotiated her way to graduate school, but was not apprised of her perceived difficulties in using traditional grammar earlier in her education. Since effective communication, according to Washington State guidelines is that students use what they have previously learned the rules should be reviewed and reinforced often, but in a manner that does not negate another's cultural capital.

### **Grammar Confusion**

In addition to the cultural capital component infused with the teaching of grammar, confusion seems to exist on the actual importance of teaching grammar usage. Mary J. Schleppegrell writes "...many researchers and teachers support the view that grammar is a necessary set of rules for accuracy in language use and [but] that grammar plays no role in writing development" (p. 121). I find this statement confusing because to grow as a writer, one must be competent in writing for many different purposes and audiences. If this is true, knowledge of grammar usage is a prerequisite. J.P. Patterson cites a survey taken of high school teachers in which they place different degrees of importance on grammar usage and punctuation as it relates to writing skills as a whole. High school teachers placed a higher importance on such skills as developing logical arguments and analyzing an issue or problem, while rating grammar and usage skills of lower import. Teachers also reported that they rarely taught grammar and usage without also teaching writing skills as a whole (Patterson, 2006). His study led me to conclusion that, although research supports the notion that grammar should not be taught in isolation, certain rules, just like certain words, must be committed to memory.

### **Pedagogies of Grammar Instruction**

This brings me to what I have found as two important questions: should grammar be taught as a set of unbreakable rules or should grammar be taught in conjunction with other aspects of writing to effectively communicate? This is a basis for one of the ongoing debates between "Traditional Grammar" instruction and what other professionals term "Functional Grammar" instruction. In many ways this debate between Traditional and Functional Grammar mirrors the debate between phonics and whole language reading instruction as both have many supporters.

Call it what you will: traditional grammar, standard grammar or prescriptive grammar. The commonality in all these terms is that they describe rules that govern the use of English language and all establish a proper way in which to speak or write. This is the grammar that is explicitly taught in schools. Like many other aspects of public school curriculum, grammar became a way to establish class distinction and cultural capital. We are taught to make corrections, which students will do, but somewhere along the line there seems to be a disconnect between retention and understanding. The disconnect some students have between retention and understanding the rules of grammar has a certain logic. One of the reasons for this disconnect is that that the literature we teach our students is rife with examples of popular and respected writers who often do not adhere to the rules of grammar (Shuster, 2003).

Current research has found that grammar instruction can be far more effective if grammar is incorporated into student writing instruction (Lindblom, 2005). This is where the proponents of traditional grammar diverge. Functional grammar proponents acknowledge that many components of grammar usage are learned best within the context of learning the conventions of writing as whole, not isolated through drills( Kenneth, 2006). Many believe that it is more appropriate to teach parts of speech and grammar usage after students have achieved writing fluency and

conceptual understanding. The problem, as it is with most curriculums, is that teachers are expected to teach what the community expects them to teach. It is far easier for the community to ascertain what their children are being taught when they see the instant results of grammar taught in isolation.

### **Melding the Traditional with the Functional**

In my research I found countless studies petitioning the necessity of functional grammar for student success (Schleppegrell, 2007; Patterson, 2006; Lindblom, 2005), but a paucity of actual lessons or activities to teach grammar usage. I found only explanations of the rules, followed by the exceptions of the rules, followed by worksheets. I have attempted to adapt those I have found into lessons that offer more differentiated instruction and assessment. But none of these activities take the place of constructive feedback and reinforcement. The same feedback and reinforcement for grammar usage should be adhered to by all teachers across all curricula. My research has led me to the conclusion that all teachers should be well-versed in traditional grammar in order to incorporate traditional grammar into functional grammar lesson plans. What follows are tips and lesson plans to help teachers.

#### *Tips for Teachers*

\*Find out what the students already know.

Proper pre-assessments are fundamental when teaching grammar, some experienced teachers recommend giving the final before beginning a planned lesson. Why invite boredom if what you are about to teach has already been learned?

\*There are times when grammar and punctuation should take a backseat.

For example, short writing prompts and short narrative assignments.

\*When correcting grammar errors always model and review the rules.

#### *Lesson plan idea*

This lesson plan on grammar pet peeves is a great way to introduce middle and secondary students to the power of grammar. It is free and can be adjusted as needed.

[http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson\\_view.asp?id=1091](http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=1091)

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## Strategies for Effective Communication Between Schools and Families

Jana Ortis

### Introduction

The one and only thing that I am nervous about, the thing that really scares me about being a teacher – is communicating with the families of my students. I'm not a very social person and if left on my own, I feel that I would fail the parents/guardians of my students. I fear that I would neglect to keep them up to date on events in the classroom or let them know how their students are doing. Simply put, the idea of communicating with families scares me. This project forced me to look critically at what I need to communicate to families; to create and stick to a process for communicating with families. Through this project I have a better understanding of what parents really want from me, as a teacher, and have found my answer to that elusive question of how often to send stuff home.

I started off asking what parents want from teachers. What do they want to know, how often do they wish to be informed and how do they want to be contacted? The best way to find out is to ask, so I sent-out interview questions to parents of school-aged children from various communities. I wanted to know what successes teachers have had in communicating with families. What did the seasoned teachers say about what works and what doesn't, in the world of our educational system? I sent out interview questions to teachers of different grade levels, from 1<sup>st</sup> grade through high school to determine communication practices teachers do that are successful and what issues are the most important to communicate. Through this I started to wonder, what were the primary reasons to communicate with families? What do the "experts" think are the important issues involved with school-home communication? From reading what the scholars had to say on communication I came to a sound second reason as to why we should develop effective communication practices between families and schools: When parents are involved with their child's school and education, the child achieves at a higher level and can adjust to the educational setting easier (Von, Bos, Schumm, 2000).

In this paper I will discuss the findings from my parent/guardian interviews, as well as my teacher interviews. I will then discuss the discrepancies I found between what parents want and what teachers do. Finally I will discuss what the scholars say about communicating with families and end with some things to think about when trying to construct a communication process of your own.

### What Do Families Really Want?

As part of my research for this project I interviewed 15 parents of school-aged children from various backgrounds and economic classes within my surrounding communities. To get straight to the point I will give the data that I collected. When asked the question *In what way would you prefer to be contacted?*: 9 parents said they would prefer email, 4 preferred phone calls home, and only 2 preferred notes sent home. To the question *What do you want teachers to communicate to you?*: 8 parents wanted progress reports, 7 parents were concerned about grades, 6 parents wanted to be informed of misbehaviors, all parents wanted to be informed of behaviors in general either good or bad, and 6 parents wanted to know about upcoming events in the classroom. Question three was *What do you hope to get out of parent/teacher conferences?*: 5 parents wanted to know about progress in general, 5 parents wanted to know about their child's goals (achieved, perceived and missed), 2 parents wanted to know how to achieve the goals set for

the student, 2 parents wanted to know “anything that has to do with my kid”, 1 parent wanted to know about their child’s grades, 1 parent was interested in the status of their child within the classroom, another parent wanted to know how to establish open lines of communication with the school and yet another parent wanted an overview of the curriculum.

The summit point from interviewing parents is every parent wants something different for their child from the teacher. The best way to start off the school year would be to create a questionnaire that you send out to all parents/guardians of the children in your classroom to find out what they want. I had good results, and learned a lot from asking families about: the preferred method of contact, what they want communicated from the teacher, the goals they have for their children, what it takes to get them involved with school events such as conferences and curriculum nights, how often they would like to receive information on their child’s progress and what areas they want information about. Sandra Tutwiler reminds us to ask about other languages spoken in the home and what technology is available to the parent and student (Tutwiler, 2005).

### **What Do Teachers Do?**

During my research I also contacted teachers from various grade levels to ask them about their successful, and sometimes unsuccessful, communication practices. My research sample for teachers was quite a bit smaller than for families, with only 7 teacher interviews returned. Here are the questions I asked the teachers and a sampling of their answers. *What’s the easiest way to contact parents?* 4 of the teachers said email and 3 said phone calls/messages are the easiest method. A 1<sup>st</sup> grade teacher I interviewed put it nicely when she said “to get info home, it really varies from kid to kid – family to family”, another reason for the beginning of the year questionnaire. *What do you think are the most important issues to be communicated to families?* The answers for this question varied radically, including daily progress, special events, behavior issues, poor homework return and anecdotes about cute/funny things their child has done or said in class. *What do you hope you get out of parent/teacher conferences?* All teachers said that they want some kind of support or creation of teamwork for the education of the child, 4 of the teachers said that they want understanding and cooperation from the parents, one teacher also said that he wants the parents to understand their responsibility in the education and success of their child. *How often do you communicate grades/progress with families? And how is this communicated?* All teachers said that they send home grades quarterly, 4 teachers said that they send home progress reports or graded homework home weekly and one teacher had a good idea of letting parents have the right to request a progress report when they desire one. *What works to get families into the school/classroom for parent nights and as volunteers?* Teachers were unanimous in the idea that providing food gets parents and families into the classroom and school, 4 teachers said that game nights were helpful to get families into the classrooms, 2 teachers said that if it’s advertised enough then parents will show up, and one teacher said that there is nothing that will get parents into the classroom. Finally I asked, *Do you have a class website? If so, is it updated regularly? Is it utilized by the parents?* Every single one of the teachers said that they have websites and update them “mostly” regularly and 6 out of 7 teachers said that the parents utilize the websites regularly. Is there an inconsistency between what parents want and what teachers believe about communication?

### **Discrepancies Between What Teachers Do And Parents Want**

While reading all of the interviews and tallying numbers, I realized that there are some glaring discrepancies between what teachers think parents want and subsequently do, and what

parents want. The first clash that I noticed was in regard to what parents want communicated and what teachers say are the most important things to communicate. Most parents said they want to know about grades, progress and misbehaviors. Only one teacher interviewed mentioned progress and one talked about misbehaviors or changes in behavior. The teachers seemed to focus on special events and communicating good news. Just something to think about when you are talking to parents: are you talking to them about something they want to know, or about something *you think* is important?

The disconnect between the wants of parents and the ideas of teachers continues into the field of technology with the class website. Teachers are under the assumption that families frequently visit the class website; in fact every teacher I interviewed said this. The parents, on the other hand, said that they looked at the websites once or twice, definitely not frequently. Not even occasionally. The cited reason behind the limited visits to the website? The websites are rarely updated. The teachers all said that they updated the websites regularly, but a frequent comment from the parents was that the websites were rarely updated, so they seldom looked at them. The lessons learned from this are easy; if you have a website, update it frequently if you want parents to look at it; put updates on the main page so parents don't have to go through every page to find something new; and think carefully before you decide to create and maintain a class website.

One of the questions I was most interested in was: *What gets parents to come to school functions?* This is another area of discrepancy between families and teachers. Almost all of the teachers said that providing food was the biggest draw for parents, followed by games, while the families said that flexible/family friendly time and student involvement were the biggest factors in their showing up to school or class functions. Along these same lines, parents unanimously said that they want progress reports at least monthly, some even wanted them biweekly. Teachers all said that they only send home progress reports quarterly, and less than half said that they send home graded homework regularly.

### **What We're Supposed To Be Doing**

*Beginning of the year questionnaire.* At the earliest opportunity we should send out a questionnaire to solicit information from parents. This can include their educational goals for their children, ways they would like to support their child's education, their views on education and their concerns about the school. This can be done as a telephone interview, as a note home or my favorite option, having the students interview their parents. This questionnaire can also include how they'd like to be contacted and the easiest way to get information home. This active solicitation is really the only way to get this pertinent information from the families in your classroom. These questionnaires are a good way to get to know the families that the kids in your class come from, and a great way to know what the parents/guardians are looking for and want from the child's teacher (Banks & Banks, 2007).

*Parent/Teacher conferences.* This is a very common form of family and school communication. For some teachers, this is their only form of communication with families. It is a major area of communication and not something to take lightly. Conferences are an opportunity to really get to know the families that your students come from and a venue where all of the parents' concerns come out. Sandra Tutwiler says that conferences are "effective when viewed as opportunities to ensure that complementary approaches are taking place in the school and the home to support students' growth and development" (Tutwiler, 2005, p. 164). In other words, conferences are a chance to make sure that we're all on the same page when it comes to instructing their children. To manage this, we need to make sure that parents have an equal opportunity to discuss issues

involving their child's education. Parents should be afforded the opportunity to discuss what they want for their children and the goals that they have for the year. Parents should be encouraged to discuss the social and emotional character of their children at home, as well as how they view school. This is important since the students' dispositions can greatly affect their academics. If at all possible, schools should provide interpreters for any parents who don't speak English and try to provide transportation and child care for the conferences as well (Tutwiler, 2005). Schools can also provide workbooks and study materials that the students can use at home. From the parent interviews that I collected, an important thing to consider is having flexible times available for parents who work. This may include evening, as well as weekend time slots. A big must is to allow for a lot of time and privacy. Make sure that there is enough time between conferences to allow for conferences that go long, so you don't have to rush through a conference to make up time, all the while feeling constantly behind schedule with parents waiting outside.

An important thing to remember is that parents will make judgments about the welfare of their children based on what you say during the conference and how you say it. Try to discuss strengths and weaknesses in a way that invites discussion and cooperation, not in a way that angers or embarrasses the parents. Sandra Tutwiler has a great list of euphemisms in her book *Teachers as Collaborative Partners*, they are as follows: "Lazy – can do more when she tries: Uncooperative – needs to learn to work with others: Stubborn – insists on having his own way: Rude – inconsiderate of others: Cheats – depends on others to do his work: Liar – doesn't always tell the truth: Below average – working at his own level." These simple phrases can go along way in creating an atmosphere of cooperation and trust between the families and the teacher (Tutwiler, 2005, p. 166). Remember that most parents want to be involved in their child's education and are willing to be involved if they understand what you are trying to accomplish and they know what they can do, and are expected to do, to facilitate the students' education.

Here are a few tips to plan for and work towards effective conferences. To prepare for a conference: first review the student's work samples, grades and materials: then meet with and learn the perspectives of the other teachers who work with the student: obtain samples of the student's most recent work: and finally make an outline of topics you wish to discuss for each student (Von, Bos and Schumm, 2000). During the conference make sure you listen to the parent/guardian until they are finished speaking. Allow them to speak their minds, remembering that just because you are listening to them doesn't mean that you agree with what they are saying. It's also helpful to take notes while they are talking. Write down key phrases and notes on things you want to discuss. When you reply to what they have to say, make sure you state your position calmly and be sure that they really understand your point of view. As closure, make a plan for any concerns that they have with their child and thank them for their time and input (Von, Bos and Schumm, 2000).

*Back-to-school nights and parent orientations.* It's a great idea to host a parent night in your classroom where parents can learn more about the school, the staff and the curriculum their children will be exposed to. During this meeting you can present your goals for the year for all of the students in the class. This first exposure that families have to the teacher can help set the tone for parent-teacher relationships throughout the year, so make sure you have a message that leaves parents with the knowledge that their child will have a successful academic year with a caring and knowledgeable teacher. A good way to convey this would be to create an information packet that parents can refer back to. This is especially helpful since not all parents will attend the orientation and you can send these information packets home on the first day of school (Von, Bos & Schumm, 2000).

Orientations are also a great time to share your homework policy with families and students. Parents may want to help but are unsure of what to do or how to help. It's important to let parents know why you assign the homework and why you think it's important. Is it for practice, participation, punishment, or some other reason? It's also good practice to let parents know what you expect from the student and the parent, and what the family can expect of you. Some examples of expectations include: parents monitoring and assisting as necessary and helping to determine a homework schedule; teacher created homework assignments that provide practice or enrichment of content covered in class that are meaningful; and grading homework in a timely manner, providing feedback to both parents and students (Von, Bos & Schumm, 2000).

Newsletter and notes home. Notes are familiar to most teachers: informal notes home to tell the family of a good day or more commonly a bad day. This form of written communication can be used to inform the families of school assignments, goals, and to keep parents current on what's going on in the school. It's also a good idea to encourage parents to send notes to you if they have questions or concerns (Banks & Banks, 2007). A weekly calendar of homework and events is also a great way to keep parents informed and current (Von, Bos & Schumm, 2000). Notes home can be about various things. They can contain information about problems and successes as well as goals for the students.

Newsletters are an effective way to get information to families. If they are sent home on a regular schedule then parents are more likely to expect them and read them. Newsletters are a great way to welcome new families to the school and inform parents and families about upcoming events in the school and the classroom. A good way to get parents reading the newsletters is to involve the students in the creation, or include student work and information in the newsletter. This will likely hook families and make the newsletters more meaningful (Tutwiler, 2005).

There are a few things to take into consideration when sending written communications home. First, remember that notes don't always make it home, so have a backup plan to get the information disseminated. You also have to take into consideration literacy and language use when you decide to use written communication. Notes and newsletters lose their effectiveness when inaccessible language is used, so cut down on the use of jargon when you are communicating to families. The last thing you want to do is make someone feel inferior (Tutwiler, 2005).

Phone calls home. After you send home the questionnaire you might find out that some parents preferred to be called rather than emailed. It's a great idea to call or email parents periodically to let them know how things are going. When you talk to parents, make sure you have something specific to say to them about their child and leave some time or the opportunity for them to respond to you (Banks & Banks, 2007). One suggestion that I really like is the idea of making a list of parents to contact each week with positive reports. Keep a log of the parents that you contact, try to call a family a day, and at the end of the month you'll have contacted most of the students' families in your classroom. According to Von, Bos and Schumm, students really appreciate having their parents receive good news, especially if they are students whose families usually just get bad news (2000). Remember that phone contact or emails might not always be effective. If you find that you are calling or emailing the same parents constantly, what you're doing might not be working (Tutwiler, 2005).

Grades and progress reports. Sandra Tutwiler says that progress reports and report cards are "intended to communicate information regarding students' strengths and weaknesses, level of motivation and work habits, and achievements in specific curricular areas" (2005, p. 171). But Tutwiler warns that the meaning intended by the teacher and the understanding of the

parent/guardian may differ. This can be avoided if teachers would provide the criteria and purpose for giving the grades (Tutwiler, 2005).

When communicating progress with parents, you will undoubtedly have to communicate sensitive or unpleasant information. In cases such as failing grades and behavior problems, make sure that parents are informed before it's too late to remedy the situation. Make sure that you communicate to parents what improvements you expect from their children and ways that they can help (Banks & Banks, 2007). Never be vague when you have to communicate unpleasant news. Tell the parents what you need to tell them, honestly and in a clear and straightforward language (Tutwiler, 2005).

### **Things to Think About**

Technology divide. Websites, homework hotlines, emails and videotaped events are all really neat and are great ways to get parents involved in the classroom, but not all parents have access to computers. You can work with local libraries to make sure that everyone has access to the information, but again, not all parents will be able to use these facilities (Banks & Banks, 2007). This is another good reason for the beginning of the year questionnaire. You can ask families about their access to and comfort with technology. If you find that all parents in your classroom have access to the internet then you can depend on that accommodation. If you find that some of the parents are either not comfortable with technology or unable to access it, then figure out an alternative way to get the information home. The internet can be used to notify parents of upcoming events and survey parents for their input. Parents can also email teachers directly with concerns or to get more information (Tutwiler, 2005).

Cross cultural communication. It's always a good idea to get to know the communities that your students come from. Take time to shop in their neighborhoods, visit their community centers and attend special events within the community (Banks & Banks, 2007). But even if you make all of the attempts possible to get to know the community and cultures that your students come from, clashes still occur. These are unintended and may be due to unconscious biases or from not being aware of whom you are talking to. Group membership factors can also affect the communication process on either a conscious or subconscious level. During cross cultural communication, simultaneous encoding and decoding of verbal and non verbal messages takes place, which can cause confusion or misinterpretations (Tutwiler, 2005).

#### When creating your communication system

Every teacher is going to create a different type of communication program. There are a few main things to consider when trying to put together your personal communication system. First, think long and hard about how much time and energy you are willing to put into communicating with families. If you know you will have limited time, then be upfront and honest with the families about the times you are available and the best ways to contact you. Second, get to know the families of the students you are teaching. Actively solicit information as to how parents would like to be contacted and in what language and let that inform your decisions about how to contact each family. Third, figure out if you want volunteers in your classroom. It is quite a bit of work to manage and schedule volunteers, so it's up to you to decide whether you want to undertake parent volunteers. Finally, figure out what's comfortable for you and use that as a starting point. Parents are our biggest allies and can be our greatest barriers to good education. Figure out how to communicate with them, comfortably and in a respectful way, and we can make our jobs easier and our students' education a little better.

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## Connected Mathematics 2: A Closer Look

Robert Preston

### Introduction

My goal for this independent contract was to gain familiarity with the Connected Mathematics Two (CMP2) curriculum by reviewing their materials for teachers. I hoped to increase my understanding of how this curriculum ties to state standards by compiling a spreadsheet of units in the curriculum and their corresponding standards. I was interested in considering how to modify the curriculum through accommodations to work with diverse learners and demonstrating my learning by writing accommodations for a lesson plan. I was also interested in considering modifications to increase relevance to students and demonstrating my learning through writing an adjusted lesson plan. Many students in middle school begin to become disengaged with mathematics, and I will want many tools at my disposal to keep their motivation.

I chose to look at this curriculum because it is the constructivist curriculum that is used by many districts in this area, it is the curriculum I will work with during my next student teaching experience, and may be the curriculum I will work with in my first teaching job. While I know it will take years to learn best how to work with the curriculum, I wanted create an initial framework and familiarity on which to base my work with it in the future. I also hope that my familiarity with CMP2 will make me more marketable to districts using this curriculum.

In the following sections, I will describe the steps I took to accomplish the above goals, and I will describe what I learned. I will begin by discussing the development, philosophy, and pedagogy of the CMP2 curriculum. To learn more about CMP2 from a practitioner's perspective, I first interviewed a teacher experienced working with CMP2. I also attended a meeting of Olympia middle school teachers who were collaborating on how to work with the curriculum and discussing its alignment with state standards.

In order to explore how closely the CMP2 curriculum aligns to state and national standards and what gaps exist, I made a spreadsheet that organizes the lessons in the sixth grade probability unit with their corresponding state and national standards. To inform my lesson plan modifications for diverse learners, I reviewed two books that are resources on teaching mathematics using a constructivist approach, as well as the supplemental materials provided in the curriculum. I then adjusted a lesson from the probability unit for a student receiving special education services. In order to inform my lesson plan modifications designed around student interest, I conducted a written survey of the two classes I will student teach. I asked them about their interests related to mathematics and tailored some of the questions to the topic of probability. My survey also assessed their general attitudes about mathematics. Finally, I modified a lesson plan from the probability unit in order to reflect student interests as informed by my survey.

### Increase Familiarity with CMP2

As a first step in this project, I needed to learn more about the pedagogy and structure of CMP2. To do this, I utilized CMP2's online resources, their special needs handbook, and the student and teacher editions of the sixth grade probability unit titled "How Likely is it?" The following is a summary of what I learned about CMP2 from this work.

CMP2 was developed at Michigan State University with funding from the National Science Foundation. The approaches in the curriculum are based on research and the curriculum was

extensively field-tested during its development. It is published by Pearson Prentice Hall (Lappan, 2008).

CMP2 organizes its content into four strands of mathematics: Numbers and Operation; Geometry and Measurement; Data Analysis and Probability; and Algebra. These strands are constant across grade levels. The curriculum has eight units per grade level; each unit is divided into several investigations. Each unit is ten to twenty days in duration and focuses on one overarching mathematical idea.

The CMP2 math curriculum is based on a constructivist approach to teaching and learning. It focuses on students creating meaning rather than knowledge being transmitted from teacher to student. CMP2's overall goal is that:

All students should be able to reason and communicate proficiently in mathematics. They should have knowledge of and skill in the use of the vocabulary, forms of representation, materials, tools, techniques, and intellectual methods of the discipline of mathematics, including the ability to define and solve problems with reason, insight, inventiveness, and technical proficiency.

CMP2 is designed with a problem-centered approach in which teachers launch a problem that clearly lays out expectations for students. Students then work alone, or in pairs, groups, or as a class, to explore the problem. Exploration strategies may include gathering data, sharing ideas, looking for patterns, making conjectures, and developing problem-solving strategies. Finally, the teacher leads in encouraging students to share and summarize their learning (Lappan, 2008).

The authors of CMP2 recognize that deep understanding often takes time to develop. Students are not expected to immediately master the concepts introduced in the lessons. While some lessons are used to introduce concepts, others are designed to review concepts, and other lessons are designed for student mastery; the intention or type of lesson is clearly marked for teachers.

To get a better understanding of the CMP2 curriculum through the eyes of practitioners, I attended a meeting of about a dozen Olympia School District (OSD) middle school math teachers. The OSD adopted the CMP2 math curriculum last year and started using it this year. The purpose of the meeting was to figure out how to sequence the units next year. The district uses two tracks of mathematics working at different paces to cover the same material. The teachers decided they needed to figure out how they were going to track the students into these classes.

The teachers did not want to rely on the WASL or the district standardized test alone, so they decided to develop a third test that would also be used in considering student placement. In any case, the teachers did not want the results of these three tests, taken in fifth grade, to prevent a student from being able to reach algebra in eighth grade. To ensure that option was available the teachers made a chart of possible classes that students could go into based on their sixth grade placement and determined that all students would at least have the chance of taking algebra in eighth grade. At this meeting they also distributed the supplemental algebra unit for sixth graders that was developed by Portland Public Schools.

I was quite impressed by how efficiently and enthusiastically the teachers worked together. They did a substantial amount of work in three hours and seemed to have fun in the process. I was delighted to see how easy it is to make and adjust tests using the software that is a part of the CMP2 materials. When they built the test for fifth graders to help in their sixth grade math placement, they did a good job of narrowing the questions down to those that touched on the most

important mathematical ideas addressed by the standards. They also did a good job of eliminating questions that may not give them an accurate idea of a student's mathematical knowledge.

I also interviewed the mentor teacher that I will be working with next quarter. She used the Connected Mathematics 1 curriculum for one year, participated in a full year pilot of the CMP2 curriculum, and worked to get the CMP2 curriculum adopted by the Olympia School District.

The teacher did say it was difficult to work with CMP1 at first without any training. She is generally pleased with the curriculum now and says that CMP2 remedied many of the problems she observed in CMP1. For example, CMP2 includes more skills practice. Among the struggles and challenges she noted regarding learning to work with CMP2, she said it took some time to adjust to how language based the curriculum is, with a large amount of reading and writing. She said it was a little hard to get used to the idea that she did not have to teach some concepts for mastery the first time. The biggest challenge she encountered with CMP2 is with parents' lack of familiarity in how to help their children with homework within a constructivist curriculum.

The teacher said she frequently makes adaptations for the whole class that help all students, something that is encouraged under the curriculum. She said the area where students most often need individual adaptations is in the area of reading and writing, and usually this involves giving more time to students for writing assignments. She also gives a pre-test and then allows students unlimited time to take the test.

While I know this teacher is overall satisfied with this curriculum, our discussion did highlight some of the challenges. The difficulty that some parents have in helping their children with homework under CMP2 was a recurring theme in the debates over the curriculum's adoption. The focus on reading and writing in this curriculum appears to also be an area of significant challenge for some students. However, I also view this as a strength in the curriculum due to how it reinforces and builds on the skills of communicating mathematical thinking. It appears that allowing students the time and space to struggle with ideas is likely to be a challenge with this curriculum. Teachers and parents often naturally want to jump in and help students who are struggling with an idea; however, there are times when it may be better to let them struggle in order that they can come to their own understanding. These are all challenges that it will be good for me to be aware of as I embark on using this curriculum in the classroom.

### **Evaluate CMP2 Alignment with State Standards and National Guidelines**

Knowledge of how units and lessons in the CMP2 curriculum relate to state and national standards will be important to my effectiveness in the area of student achievement. To kick this off, I needed to explore how closely the CMP2 curriculum aligns to state and national standards and what gaps exist. I set out to build on the framework laid by my meetings with math teachers and my prior knowledge about state and national standards by creating a spreadsheet that lists the units in the curriculum with their corresponding state standards.

In order to examine how well CMP2 aligns with standards and if there are gaps I would need to address with supplemental materials or instruction, I reviewed the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) standards, the Washington State grade level expectancies (GLEs), and the new math standards being proposed by the Washington State Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). In order to organize this information, I made a spreadsheet. I also reviewed the standards proposed by an organization called "Where's The Math?" (WTM) in response to the OSPI draft standards. WTM is a group of parents and teachers who are proponents of the traditional approach to mathematics. I did not choose to include the proposed WTM standards in my spreadsheet.

OSPI's document introducing the draft standards states that standards should be considered as learning goals and should not dictate curriculum or pedagogy. In comparing the GLEs with the draft standards I can see that the new standards offer measurable goals rather than topics to be covered or understandings to be encouraged. This will allow teachers to more easily backwards design their lessons to reach the intended goals.

The CMP2 curriculum was designed around the NCTM Principles and Standards 2000. Many of the standards are written as topics to be covered or understandings to be encouraged rather than measurable learning goals. In order to align with individual state standards, they suggest that the sequence of units may be adjusted. The exceptions are several multiple unit investigations that build upon each other. CMP2 provides a table that correlates the lessons to national standards, for this reason I chose not to include the national standards in my spreadsheet (NCTM, 2000).

The CMP2 curriculum aligns well with Washington state standards. I could find no significant gaps, but the unit sequence must be adjusted to be in alignment with state standards. The most significant adjustment is that CMP2 introduces algebra as a unit in the seventh grade while Washington standards require it to be done in sixth grade.

While the WTM group criticizes the GLEs and the OSPI revised standards as dictating pedagogy, I could not find any evidence of this. In fact, it appeared that many of the WTM recommendations were more prescriptive in approaching problems. In many instances, they prescribe teaching a single, particular algorithm, whereas the OSPI standards appeared to encourage different methods of solving problems and representing answers.

### **Accommodations for Students Receiving Special Education Services**

Next, I adjusted a lesson for a special education student from the probability unit. In order to do this I reviewed *About Teaching Mathematics* by Marilyn Burns and *Elementary and Middle School Mathematics* by John Van de Walle. I also reviewed additional materials provided in the curriculum related to modifications for students with special needs.

To modify lessons to meet the needs of students receiving special services, Van de Walle recommends using problems with multiple entry points, differentiating tasks, using heterogeneous groupings, making accommodations and modifications for English language learners, and listening carefully to students (Van de Walle, 2007, p. 64). He also recommends using preferential seating, minimizing distractions, repeating main ideas, chunking information, establishing predictable routines, highlighting key ideas, and providing verbal and visual instructions (Van de Walle, 2007, P. 97).

Marilyn Burns also gives suggestions for working with students with special needs. Her recommended strategies include gives a good general constructivist view of mathematics but does not deal specifically with accommodations for students receiving special education services. Her suggestions regarding working with individual students are applicable to students with special needs as well (Burns, 2000).

CMP2 appears to have many strategies that are beneficial to students receiving special education services embedded in the curriculum. For example, students are allowed and encouraged to use calculators and manipulatives, repetition and review, high expectations, emphasizing conceptual knowledge over procedures, the use of cooperative group work, and previews of upcoming work. The curriculum claims to use real-world problems to engage student interest.

Teachers can also make accommodations on a case-by-case basis for individual students. The CMP2 curriculum comes with a wealth of resources and suggestions for teachers making

accommodations or support components for individual students receiving special education services. Teachers can easily modify handouts to bold or highlight important words or numbers. They can scaffold or break down questions into smaller components. They can add additional instructions, hints, context, and examples, as well as provide tools to allow students to focus on the important cognitive task of the question. Teachers can provide symbols or other visual representations, provide additional space so a student can work on one piece of paper, or use “friendly numbers” in order to simplify computation, e.g. solving for  $x$  in  $3x=6$  instead of  $13x=51$  when emphasizing dividing both sides of the equation by the same number. Teachers can also accommodate individual students by providing additional time for assignments, shortening the length of assignments, allowing the use of a calculator, allowing oral answers, allowing test questions to be read to student, providing the textbook on tape to students, using preferential seating, allowing notes or text to be used during test, providing visual and verbal instructions, providing students with organizational tools, allowing students to test in separate room, offering enlarged text, providing notes to students, and encouraging the use of manipulatives.

### **Modifications to Increase Relevance to Students**

Engagement is an ongoing challenge with middle school students in mathematics, especially those that do not have confidence in their abilities. As I expect with any national curriculum, CMP2 is not designed around local concerns or culture. The curriculum does attempt to make math more engaging by contextualizing problems, or putting a math problem into the context of an everyday situation. The rationale in the unit on probability is that students will find the problems interesting due to their interest in fairness. I want to find ways to make the unit more interesting to students by having it include their interests as a way to learn the mathematical goals of the unit as it relates to the state standards.

I compiled a short questionnaire for the students I will work with in my spring student teaching assignment. I asked them about their interests and hobbies to see how I could tie that in to our learning. I asked them how they use math outside of school. I asked them to rate how much they like math on a one to ten scale and to explain why they chose that rating. Finally, based on my interview with their teacher and her observation of their interest in games, I asked them what games they enjoy playing in which they use probability to determine their strategy. At the end of the survey I included the answers I came up with myself to help the students get to know me and to model some ideas in hopes that I will avoid blank responses.

I was interested to see how individual students would respond. In general, the students' answers were very thoughtful. Many students commented on finding mathematics boring. I am curious to find out in both classes if this comment on boredom is related to pacing being too slow, concepts being too simple or complex, a disconnect from the content, or other factors. Sports and video games were most commonly listed as hobbies and interests. Monopoly was a game that many students listed as a favorite. I need to become more familiar with that game to see how it can be used in teaching probability. The students provided me with a great deal of material on which to build.

I was also interested in comparing the responses of the two classes. As I suspected based on my masters presentation research into mathematics anxiety in middle school, the students in the slower track generally had a less positive attitude about mathematics than the students in the accelerated track. I also found that the students in the accelerated class in general listed a larger number of interests with a wider range than the students in the slower class.

I adjusted a lesson plan to reflect student interests. Their teacher informed me that the class as a whole is interested in the concept of fairness. In the investigation that works with the concept of fairness, I encouraged students to come up with rules for their own games of chance that are fair.

### **Conclusions**

Several things have impacted my thinking through doing this work. The discussions with teachers reinforced the notion that it will be a challenge for parents with this curriculum, which was something I first became aware of at the community meeting last year regarding the math curriculum adoption. At this meeting, many parents voiced their concerns about their ability to help students do homework under CMP2. It reminded me of the importance of reading and writing in mathematics. I was also reminded by the surveys I did of the challenge of addressing the issue of self-esteem related to mathematics.

This work has highlighted several ideas I can use as a teacher and areas where I will need to do more work. I will need to investigate strategies and seek professional development opportunities related to working with parents with this curriculum. If I am unable to work with parents to have them be helpful with homework, I may need to reconsider the type of homework I give and use it as an opportunity for skills practice, which is something that parents can successfully help with. I will need to continue to focus my professional development on the area of reading and writing in mathematics. I will also need to utilize the recommendations for practice related to self-esteem that I compiled in my masters presentation paper.

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**Appendix: Table of Grade Level, Content Area, GLEs and Standards for Math Topics**

		<b>Content Area</b>	<b>GLE</b>	<b>OSPI Draft Standards</b>
<b>Sixth Grade</b>				
Prime Time	1	Factors & Multiples	6.1.1.6	6.5.B
Bits & Pieces 1	2	Rational Numbers	6.1.1.1	6.1.A, 6.3.C
Shapes & Designs	3	2D Geometry	6.1.2.1	6.4.All
Bits & Pieces 2	4	Fraction Operations	6.1.1.6	6.1.B, C, D, E, G
Covering & Surrounding	5	2D Measurement	6.1.2.2, 7.1.2.5	6.3.F 6.4.All
Bits & Pieces 3	6	Decimals & Percent	6.1.1.4	6.1.B, C, D, E, G 6.3.C
How Likely Is It?	7	Probability	6.1.4.1, 2	6.3.G, H
Data About Us	8	Statistics	6.1.4.3, 4, 5, 6	6.5.A
<b>Seventh Grade</b>				
Variables & Patterns	1	Intro to Algebra	6.1.5.1	6.2.E, F 7.1.All
Stretching & Shrinking	2	Similarity	7.1.3.1	7.3.All
Comparing & Scaling	3	Ratio, Proportion, & Percent	7.1.1.4	6.3.All
Accentuate the Negative	4	Pos./Neg. Numbers	7.1.1.5	7.1.All
Moving Straight Ahead	5	Linear Relationships	7.1.5.1	7.1.All
Filing & Wrapping	6	3D Measurement	6.1.2.1, 4	7.2.All
What Do You Expect?	7	Probability & Expected Value	7.4.1, 2	8.3.All
Data Distributions	8	Variability & Comparing Groups	7.1.4.4	
<b>Eighth Grade</b>				
Thinking w/ Math Models	1	Linear & Inverse Relationships	8.1.5.1	8.1.All
Looking for Pythagoras	2	Pythagorean Theorem	8.1.2.5	8.2.F, G
Growing, Growing, Growing	3	Exponential Relationships	8.1.1.1	8.2.E
Frogs, Fleas, and Painted Cubes	4	Quadratic Relationships	8.1.5.4	8.1.All
Kaleidoscopes, Hubcaps, and Mirrors	5	Symmetry & Transformations	8.1.3.1, 2, 4	8.2.All
Say It With Symbols	6	Making Sense of Symbols	8.1.5.4	8.1.All
Shapes of Algebra	7	Linear Systems & Inequalities	8.1.5.1	8.1.All
Samples & Populations	8	Data & Statistics	8.1.4.3, 4	8.3.All

## **Multiple Intelligences**

Angela Preston-Mortinson

In the *Unschooled Mind*, Howard Gardner (1991) argues that schools fail to connect with the natural ways in which children learn. When varied modalities of learning and intelligences are not emphasized or validated, the result is that even successful students walk away from public schools without “generative” or “deep” or “genuine” understanding of whatever subject or discipline they have been learning (Gardner, 1991, p. 14). Students may be able to take a standardized test, but struggle to apply their understanding when problems are arranged differently, or when they have real-life applications. “Genuine understanding is most likely to emerge, and be apparent to others, if people possess a number of ways of representing knowledge of a concept or skill and can move readily back and forth among these forms of knowing” (Gardner, 1991, p. 13). According to Howard Gardner’s works, all humans possess seven intelligences – “language, logical-mathematical analysis, spatial representation, musical thinking, the use of the body to solve problems or to make things, an understanding of other individuals, and an understanding of ourselves” (Gardner, 1991, p. 12). Everyone has these intelligences, but they may be more advanced or realized in different people, or may manifest in different ways. While schools and teachers often assume that everyone learns the same way and that classroom practices and curriculum can use the cookie-cutter approach, people learn and use knowledge in very different ways.

In the United States, schools largely emphasize linguistic ways of teaching and assessing followed by logical-quantitative modes (Gardner, 1995). These trends have become more intensified with the No Child Left Behind legislation, which emphasizes standardized curriculum and standardized forms of assessments. To help schools be more inclusive of human intelligences, Gardner advocates presenting and assessing disciplines in a variety of methods. Knowledge should be taught less through direct instruction but when the teacher, serving as a “coach or facilitator,” poses certain problems, creates certain challenges, and places the student in certain situations (Gardner, 1991, p. 119). Feelings, interests, motivation, values, and the affective domains of students are important to engage students, rather than merely targeting cognitive abilities based only a couple intelligences (Gardner, 1991; Gardner, 1995). “We have failed to appreciate that in nearly every student there is a five-year-old ‘unschooled’ mind struggling to get out and express oneself” (Gardner, 1991, p. 3). When young children explore their words, before ever having attended schools, they are apt to discover and learn things in experiential ways that address all levels of intelligences. When schools organize and structure student learning in regimented ways, denying students authentic experiences to learn, or overly dealing with a narrow view of what intelligences are important, this creates a dichotomy that can compel students to get frustrated with education or turn away from schools.

To envision and exemplify different approaches to learning, Howard Gardner highlights Project Spectrum – an exemplary educational approach for young children. Children are surrounded every day with “engaging materials that evoke the use of a range of intelligences (Gardner, 1991, p. 206). For instance, students have a naturalistic corner, where they study and examine biological specimens. This workplace allows students to engage their analytical minds, but also appeals to multiple senses. Students also have a storytelling area where they create their own stories and “storyboards” using props. This approach caters to students’ imaginations in terms

of linguistics and drama (Gardner, 1991). Students also have a building corner to construct and manipulate models, which gets at spatial intelligences. All the activities in Project Spectrum appeal to various intelligences by offering actual activities for students. Students are encouraged throughout the year to try out different learning centers, or to experience the center with an adult in a teacher-apprentice relationship. At the end of the year, the teacher takes the accumulated information about each child and documents strengths, weaknesses, and specific things and skills that student can work on (Gardner, 1991).

“Whole-language” approaches to literacy fits into Howard Gardner’s belief that children should, at a young age, be immersed into the world of books and become “meaningful apprentices to competent literate individuals” (Gardner, 1991, p. 211). Instead of doing worksheets and reducing the curriculum to decontextualized phonics or parts of speech, students:

tell stories and have others write them down; they make their own storybooks out of a combination of pictures, invented spelling, and dictated correct spelling; they ‘read’ their stories to others and listen to, comment critically upon, or even ‘read’ the stories written by others; they may type out their own narratives on a keyboard (Gardner, 1991, p. 211).

Of course students should be literate, but if reading is taught in a way that is not meaningful or interesting for students, educators from a MI background caution that decontextualized approaches to reading will diminish the desire for young people to read. The same concepts behind “whole-language” approach can be carried over in math. In “whole-math” environments, students are encouraged to “engage in games that involve measuring, counting, and comparing, not merely to rehearse number skills but also to help out in activities that are needed and valued” (Gardner, 1991, p. 212). They do not learn math simply to learn math, but to make meaning of the world around them with mathematical reasoning (Gardner, 1991). Unit and theme-based learning also can appeal to different modes of learning rather than relying on worksheets or boxed curriculum that reinforce a rigid view of intelligences. In units, more time is allowed for the teacher and students to experience the subject for longer periods, so students can approach the unit from multiple perspectives (Gardner, 1991). Teachers best serve multiple intelligence curriculum when they foster a “project-centered environment, the involvement in an apprenticeship relation, [with an] emphasis on cooperative learning” (Gardner, 1991, p. 243). Teachers should also introduce new learning materials in different ways, appealing to the different intelligences. Rynelle Bircher teaches at Olympic View Elementary School in Lacey, WA. She plans lessons based on the theory of Multiple Intelligences. She attempts to reach as many students as possible by teaching to as many intelligences at once. The North Thurston School District encourages her to incorporate MI in her lessons, maintaining that it will enable teachers to be more effective. During the math lesson that I watched her teach, Rynelle Bircher engaged students in at least five areas of intelligences. Although linguistic and logic based intelligences are highly visible in most classrooms, we need to also be aware of overlooked intelligences. Intrapersonal intelligence is often under valued in public school classrooms. This intelligence is defined as having self-knowledge and the basis of acting on this self-knowledge (Armstrong, 2000). Using journals, quiet time, and opportunities for students to reflect would be extremely valuable to engage this intelligence in students. Interpersonal intelligence is “the ability to perceive and make distinctions in the moods, intentions, motivations, and feelings of other people” (Armstrong, 2000, p. 2). Students with interpersonal intelligence can often be seen as problematic or behaviorally

challenged because they enjoy talking and processing their ideas aloud. Collaborative group work and allowing opportunities throughout the school day for peer to peer interaction is valuable to reach these students (Campbell, 1996). Musical intelligence self-evidently refers to music, but students have a sensitivity to components of music such as pitch, rhythm, melody, tone (Armstrong, 2000). Teachers can help these students by finding opportunities to play music in the classroom, and encouraging students to play music and sing during the day. Teachers can also help their students by finding grants and resources to allow students to take music lessons or to purchase musical instruments. Spatial intelligence refers to “the ability to perceive the visual-spatial world accurately” (Armstrong, 2000, p. 2). Students who orient themselves in visual ways, represent things visually, and learn in a visual way possess spatial intelligence (Campbell, 1996). Enriching the curriculum with opportunities for students to visually represent their work, using graphs, charts, artwork are ways to reach these students. Naturalist intelligence refers to students’ ability to be aware of their environments and surroundings. This can manifest in students awareness of the natural world, how they classify things, and how they perceive their own environment and surroundings (Armstrong, 2000). Bodily and kinesthetic intelligence included direct psychical skills, but also involves students using things with their hands, and movement (Campbell, 1996). Incorporating body movement into lessons and transitions can be effective towards reaching students. Also, teachers can advocate that students get opportunities during recesses and PE classes to move freely.

Teachers designing lesson plans and units are advised to engage the use of multiple intelligences every day (Gardner, 1995). Also, teachers should be compatible with what they want students to value, and how teachers live their lives. For instance, if a teacher strives for a culture of literacy in the classroom, that teacher would do well to connect ways that reading is important and meaningful for that person. If teachers and adults get excited about writing and reading and not just give lip service to the importance of literacy, that excitement has more chance to reach and inspire students. When setting up portfolios (or “process-folios”) with students, the teacher should be willing to go over the material with enthusiasm and interest, and be able to provide specific and constructive feedback (Gardner, 1991). Students need compelling reasons for attending school and faith that what they are doing will serve a purpose in their real lives. Teachers need to make connections with skills that are learned in schools and how those skills transfer into the real world, by providing “problems, challenges, projects, and opportunities that draw in a natural and productive way on these skills” (Gardner, 1991, p. 187).

In my student teaching experience with second graders in Lakewood, WA, there was a student who was viewed as a behaviorally challenging student. His first grade teacher was skeptical about his success as a student, and warned me of how distracting he could be in class. During indoor recesses and daily breaks, I watched this student closely and observed what he liked to do without being prompted. He loved building with Legos, and so I allowed him to fidget with connecting cubes – something he could move and hold in his hands while he worked. I also encouraged regular exercise opportunities throughout the day. Once he was allowed opportunities to use his bodily and kinesthetic intelligence, he was more engaged in classroom activities. A big part of this transformation was seeing this student as he really was. Seeing kids is the most important thing we can do as teachers. Honoring students, and allowing them space to be fully who they are produces a nurturing environment where students can flourish. If we as educators perpetuate the idea that education is all about literacy and quantifiable logic, those students who are highly intelligent in other capacities are going to be left behind and develop negative self-esteem. Recognizing one intelligence in a study and praising that student can make a

huge difference in a child's life. The more awareness teachers have about multiple intelligences, the more likely they will recognize, and nourish intelligences in all students. Designing deliberate space throughout the classroom to emphasize multiple intelligences, and designing lesson plans that target learning objectives through a holistic approach to multiple intelligences will help student understanding and their desire to be life-long learners.

### **Ways To Implement Multiple Intelligences In Your Classroom**

#### Intrapersonal Intelligence ("self smart"):

- ⋈ Go on "guided imagery" tours.
- ⋈ Set aside time to reflect on new ideas and information.
- ⋈ Encourage journal writing.
- ⋈ Work on the computer.
- ⋈ Practice breathing for relaxation.
- ⋈ Use brainstorming methods before reading.
- ⋈ Listen to and read "how to" tapes and books.
- ⋈ Read "inspirational" thought-for-the-day books.

#### Interpersonal Intelligence ("people smart"):

- ⋈ Take part in group discussions or discuss a topic one-to-one.
- ⋈ Read a dialogue or a play together.
- ⋈ Do team learning/investigating projects.
- ⋈ Set up interview questions, and interview your family. Write the results.
- ⋈ Write notes to one another instead of talking.

#### Naturalistic Intelligence ("nature smart"):

- ⋈ Spend time outside noticing patterns in nature.
- ⋈ Read books and articles about nature and the environment.
- ⋈ Take hikes and record what was experienced.
- ⋈ Compare seeds, seedlings, and adult plants. Mix them up and ask your learners to match each seed to its corresponding seedling and adult.

### Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence (“body smart”):

- ⋄ Use magnetic letters, letter blocks, or letters on index cards to spell words.
- ⋄ Take a walk while discussing a story or gathering ideas for a story.
- ⋄ Make pipe cleaner letters. Form letters out of bread dough. After you shape your letters, bake them and eat them!
- ⋄ Use your whole arm (extend without bending your elbow) to write letters and words in the air.
- ⋄ Change the place where you write and use different kinds of tools to write, i.e., typewriter, computer, blackboard, or large pieces of paper.
- ⋄ Take a walk and read all the words you see.
- ⋄ Allow students to handle manipulatives.
- ⋄ Take a break and do a cross-lateral walk.

### Linguistic Intelligence (“word smart”):

- ⋄ Look at different kinds of dictionaries.
  - < Read plays and poetry out loud.
- ⋄ Write a story for a book or newsletter.
- ⋄ Keep a journal.
- ⋄ Read from books written by or for new readers.
- ⋄ Use a tape recorder to tape stories and write them down.
- ⋄ Read together, i.e., choral reading.
- ⋄ Read out loud to each other.
- ⋄ Read a section, then explain what you've read.
- ⋄ Read a piece with different emotional tones or viewpoints — one angry, one happy, etc.
- ⋄ Explore and develop the love of words, i.e., meanings of words, origin of words and idioms, names. Research your name.
  - < Look at different kinds of dictionaries.

### Spatial Intelligence (“picture smart”):

- ⋄ Write a personal narrative then illustrate it.
- ⋄ Study and create maps, diagrams and graphs.
- ⋄ Color code words so each syllable is a different color.
- ⋄ Write a word on the blackboard with a wet finger. Visualize the word as it disappears. See if you can spell it afterwards.

- ⋈ Take a survey. Put the information in a chart.
- ⋈ Write words vertically.
- ⋈ Cut out words from a magazine and use them in a letter.
- ⋈ Use pictures to stimulate reading or writing.
- ⋈ Visualize spelling words.
- ⋈ Use colorful newspapers.

Logical-mathematical Intelligence (“number/reasoning smart”):

- ⋈ Arrange cartoons and other pictures in a logical sequence.
- ⋈ Sort, categorize, and characterize word lists.
- ⋈ While reading a story, stop before you've finished and predict what will happen next.
- ⋈ Explore the origins of words.
- ⋈ Play games that require critical thinking. For example, pick the one word that doesn't fit: chair, table, paper clip, sofa. Explain why it doesn't fit.
- ⋈ Work with scrambled sentences. Talk about what happens when the order is changed.
- ⋈ After finishing a story, mind map some of the main ideas and details.
- ⋈ Write the directions for completing a simple job like starting a car or tying a shoe.
- ⋈ Make outlines of what you are going to write or of the material you've already read.
- ⋈ Write a headline for a story you've just completed.
- ⋈ Look for patterns in words.
  - < Look at advertisements critically. What are they using to get you to buy their product?

Musical Intelligence (“music smart”):

- ⋈ Use a familiar tune, song, or beat to teach spelling rules, or to remember words in a series for a test.
- ⋈ Create a poem or spoken word piece with an emphasis on certain sounds for

pronunciation.

- ∠ Clap out or walk out the sounds of syllables.
- ∠ Read together (choral reading) to work on fluency and inflection.
- ∠ Read a story with great emotion — sad, then happy, then angry. Talk about what changes — is it only tone?
- ∠ Use onomatopoeia.
- ∠ Read lyrics to music.
- ∠ Use music as background while reviewing and for helping to remember new material.
- ∠ Use rhymes to remember spelling and grammar rules.

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## **Games: Taking the Drill out of Skill**

Kellee Raines

As educators, we regularly ask students to understand big concepts when they have not yet mastered the basic facts. It seems as if we assume that students will magically absorb the basic information needed. However, my personal experiences as a teacher have led me to believe that that is not usually the case. Pushing students to learn larger concepts without paying attention to basic facts tends to create frustration. While pressure from state standards requires teachers to move at a quick pace, teachers still need to take the time to solidify basic facts to aid students who fall farther and farther behind.

Frustrated, failing, and disconnected students have been a big concern for me. Because of this, I have taken an interest in finding an answer. My experiences have led me to a couple guiding questions. How can I use documentation, research, and educational theory to support the importance of basic skills? How can I practically implement basic skills in my classroom?

My inquiry of how to best teach basic skills has led me to understand the importance of how the brain works, as well as, multiple intelligences. These two veins of reasoning have shed some light on how important basic skills are for students. Although there is a lack of evidence, all of the research has led me to believe that students can best learn basic skills through participating in structured games.

This paper addresses both how students learn and games which are most commonly used to help with basic acquisition of information. The games in this paper are limited to skill building games and not activities or lesson plans. The purpose was to develop a strategy to help students memorize and internalize information based on how the brain works. Many of the games can be adapted into your practice by slightly altering game rules or fact content.

### **Repetition and Schemata: What We Know About Brain Research**

A baby is born with a brain that is more or less a kind of blank slate. The baby's brain will only develop as he/she is exposed to repeated stimuli. Each time a child is exposed to stimuli; there is an electric response or synapses that stimulate dendrites, or extension of a neuron. The more stimuli the child is exposed to, the more pathways are created and solidified in the brain (Wolfe & Sorgen, 1990, p. 15). As the child grows older, fewer repetitions must be made to learn a concept because pathways have already been developed. For instance, a baby needs 1,000 repetitions to learn a word; a toddler needs 50 repetitions; and a kindergartener may only need a few repetitions to master a word (Kryczka, 2008). Therefore, the foundations and pathways that are created in early childhood become the corner stone to future learning (Kryczka, 2008).

**Spelling Ball**  
Spelling Ball helps students memorize spelling words through repetition and physical movement. The teacher will call out a spelling word. The first person who gets the ball will say the first letter. The student will then throw the ball to the next students who then say the next letter. If the student says the wrong letter or drops the ball, the student is out. The teacher can go through as many spelling words as possible in the time allowed.

While we know that repetition and exposure to stimuli helps to develop neurons and pathways, brain research also allows us to understand how and what the brain decides to keep and recall. Researchers found that short term memory lasts less than half a second (Goll, 2004), and within that only 5% of given stimuli is stored into long term memory. How does the brain tell which information to keep? The brain retains information only if it has something to associate the information to; everything else is discarded. The more the

brain can associate to, the more that is kept and recalled (Goll, 2004; Wolfe & Sorgen, 1990).

Educational theorists may refer to the process of developing and strengthening neurons and dendrites and the ability to store and recall information as schemata. Piaget explains that a schema is a process of organizing and interpreting information based on what is already established (Singer & Revenson, 1978, p. 17). In other words, the student uses what pathways are developed to understand the unknown stimuli. Students must have a strong basis or schema of information to build off of in order to conceptualize and develop larger concepts and connections (Goll, 2004; Singer & Revenson, 1978, p. 15).

Brain research suggests that students will build up this initial schema or network in the brain through repetition of stimuli at an early age. The more connections that are made, the more information is retained due to the ability to associate itself to information already stored in the long term memory. As educators, we can develop and internalize basic facts through repetition even at a later age, which can be later used as an association for the brain when larger concepts are introduced.

### Competition

There have been criticisms of competition. It may seem obvious to a teacher who is attempting to build a sense of community in the classroom that competition may be an obstacle. Competitive games may also painfully put on display those who can and those who cannot. More so, competition may also be viewed as a way to evoke negative emotions in students. All of these arguments can deter teachers from using competitive games. However, there are many arguments that support, rather than dismiss, the use of games whether against self or others, in the classroom.

Repetition is important for the retention of information and for understanding of larger concepts. However, we also know that half the battle is creating interest in learning basic skills. My solution is through the use of competitive games, whether against self or others. My own student teaching experience has allowed me to use games informally as a reward. Each time a game was played I have experienced a great deal of excitement which meant to the kids, a break in direct instruction or a celebration. I believe that games can cause students to take interest in the basic facts required to be successful in the game.

Games also allow teachers to sharpen not hinder the development of social relationships in the classroom. It is safe to say that most students enjoy socializing in groups. The teacher can use this to his/her advantage by not only teaching facts, but developing interpersonal skills creating heterogeneous groupings. These that may or may not be competing against will be required to work as a team. Each will be responsible for the success of the (Cook, 1997). These groupings will be discuss strategies in a collaborative group setting building social skills and accountability (Lach, 2005).

Because games do bring out a sense of social accountability, a loss may become devastating to an individual. Students can be that the brain never gets it right the first time (2005, p. 52). As well, wrong answers or

#### Pictionary

This is a good game for vocabulary development through group work. Students will form two groups. Each group will take turns at the drawing board. The person selected to draw from the group will choose a vocabulary card developed by the teacher. The student will try to represent the word in drawings. The student's team will try to guess the word with a one minute time limit. If the team guesses correctly, they will score. If they don't guess correctly within the time allotted, the other team will get one guess. The next team will then go choosing a new card.

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that are quickly and accurately corrected are important to the process of learning information. Games require mistakes and also tend to correct them immediately so that the brain can process and store the information correctly. Further, mistakes help students to make hypothesis about what went wrong and how to adjust so that they can be successful in the future (Jensen, 2005, p. 54).

It is also important to remember that feeling badly about game loss may be an impactful experience. Remembering the experience may provide motivation to correct their mistakes next time. Further, students' frustrations and upsets can be the center of emotional discussions. Games become the perfect opportunity for students to label and discuss their feelings, as well as, discuss how social interactions help or hinder the success of the group. While negative feelings are healthy, these feelings should not overwhelm the student over a long period of time, or the body will stay in an unhealthy high alert state.

### **Tug-O-War**

This game helps students to understand concepts in history while eliciting emotional responses. The students will study a subject that has two sides. The students will take a side and try to convince others to join them. After an allotted time the two sides will play Tug-O-War. Each side of the argument will take one side of the rope. They will pull the rope until one side is pulled over the middle line.

Brain research suggests that the negative feelings associated with a loss are beneficial to the retention of information. People tend to remember things that are emotionally charged whether they have a positive or negative experience (Goll, 2004). When a threatening stimulus is presented the body immediately goes into a heightened state including a heart rate increase, changing chemical levels, and high blood pressure. These increases will then influence hormone levels, immune systems, behaviors, and gene expression (Jensen, 2005, p. 96). The bodies heightened sense of awareness becomes highly sensitive making the activity or experience memorable.

While there is much discussion of how negative experience affects growth, positive feelings of success or reward can also be beneficial. Positive feelings can be induced through physical or emotional rewards. Brain research explains that the brain naturally creates its own opiate or natural high as a reward, developing a desire to repeat the activity and success (Jensen, 2005, p. 104). However, it is also beneficial to offer an extrinsic reward due to the brain's preference for predictability of expecting a reward for doing something good. Teachers must use extrinsic rewards carefully, if the same reward is used all the time, it is no longer a reward and something bigger in value must replace it. Either method motivates students to participate in game playing and memorization of basic content.

### **Multiple Intelligences: Physical Movement**

Moving the body while memorizing or learning helps students to make connections with the material. Brain research shows that the cerebellum, which is in control of bodily movements is also connected to memory attention and spatial perception (Jensen, 2005, p. 61). Further, physical movement helps increase amine levels which can help to improve focus (Jensen, 2005, p. 51). We find that often times we need a stretch or to move around when

### **Relay Teams**

This game uses the idea of physical intelligence with learning core content in a game format. Students will form two lines. The student in the front of each line will hold fly swatters. The teacher will read a question. The two students in the front of the line will answer the question by slapping the fly swatter down to signal they have the answer. If the student who was the quickest with the fly swatter answers correctly, they get a point. If not the two go to the back of the line and the next players come up.

we

are feeling sleepy or uninterested. Scientifically we do this to activate the brain as well as use movement to initiate the memory portion of the brain.

Research studies have found that movement may even help students with special needs students. Stimulation of neurons triggers learning in the brain. The study showed that movement helped students with dyslexia in reading writing and comprehension (Jensen, 2005, p. 65).

### **Applications: When and How to Use Games**

So when is the right time to use these games? There are a lot of ways to practically implement games in your classroom while taking into consideration the way students learn. Research shows that in order for a concept to be learned, it needs to be presented to younger children more frequently and at more times than older children due to the brain development present at the age of the activity (Jensen, 2005, p. 116). Research also shows that games should be limited to the amount of time students stay attentive. Although games are much more interactive

#### **Board Games That Reinforces Content**

- Scrabble** By Parker Brothers  
Use letters to spell words that connect earning points.
  - Master Mind** Distributor varies  
Develop strategies by eliminating possibilities to guess your partners color and position of pegs.
  - Yahtzee** By Milton Bradley  
Students must roll five dice to come up with possible combinations of numbers needed.
  - Dominos** Distributor varies  
Students must attempt to get the highest score connecting dominos together in increments of five.
- There are also many specialty board games for content area that can be found online.**  
[EducationallLearningGames.com](http://EducationallLearningGames.com)

than direct instruction, activities should be limited to 15-18 minutes for adults and 5-8 minutes for primary grades (Jensen, 2005, p. 37). Brain research also helps us to understand that students have natural body clocks that determine rhythms of awake and asleep time during the day. Students will experience different rhythms of mood, energy, and brain functions (Jensen, 2005, p. 49). Therefore, it is important to vary game playing at different times of the day so that all students benefit from the event.

Game playing is not meant to be the sole key to learning concepts. Education philosophy and brain research allows us to understand the process that best fits the needs of the students. Students must first be motivated to want to learn the concept, the concept must be role modeled, the students must be taught how to acquire the concept, there must be time for trial and error, practice of the concept, debriefing of the concept, and time to practice and use the concept (Jensen, 2005, p. 116). Games can be used in portions of the process, but not meant to take the place of varied activities.

Research also suggests that there is some use in priming the brain before starting a new subject matter or evaluation. Priming helps the brain to accelerate understanding of concepts and gives the brain information on which to build more complex thoughts (Jensen, 2005, p. 40). Games not only work well as a priming technique but also as a review.

Some suggestions for practically implementing game playing include: setting up game centers using board games that students can be allotted time to play once a week. Students can rotate to each center in teams, each week, to play the different games (Lach, 2005). Games can also be used as a reward for good behavior. Students can earn minutes towards game playing time on Fridays, for example. Positive behavior will be rewarded with minutes that can be accumulated at the end of the week.

Some other logistical thoughts for games are rewards for winning games. Some games are group oriented so that the whole group competes as a team against an abstract object like time. Other games require that a team wins. A suggestion is that teams could possibly be working towards making a beaded bracelet or some other kind of physical keep sake. Each time the team is successful they earn a bead for their bracelet. Other games reward only an individual. The reward for the student can vary from candy, to certificate, to verbal praise, or others ideas, according to the teacher's philosophy of rewards.

Another important facet of game playing is how to group students in teams. Some games require individual students to play, while others require students to team up. To avoid "the kid who was never picked syndrome," teachers can create groups themselves. Teachers can also set up groups at the beginning of the term that students would stay in through ought the year. The teacher can decide to use set up groups or choose another method of picking teams for particular games.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this paper was to discuss my research with games. I started out looking for a solution to the issue of failing students. Brain research and theory on schemata has led me to believe that students need to have internalized basic facts in order to learn large concepts. This I believe can be done through playing games in the classroom. Even more, games present challenging material, develop interest in basic facts, and allow students to explore emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills. The use of games is easy, practical and fun.

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## Appendix of Games

### Physical Games

#### **Spelling Ball**

- Content Area:** English, Spelling  
**Age:** All  
**How Many Players Required:** 2 or more players required  
**How to Play:** Teacher will call out a spelling word. The students will spell out the word throwing a ball to each other to determine who is next. If the student misspells the word they give the ball back to the teacher.  
**Adaptations:**
  - Teacher can substitute spelling words with other ordering concepts.
  - Teacher can have student who misspells be out.**Reference:** MIT Student

#### **Nations (Czechoslovakia)**

- Content Area:** History, geography  
**How Many Players Required:** 5 or more Players  
**Age:** 10 and older  
**How to Play:** While outside, players will stand around a drawn circle with one foot touching the circle. Each student picks a nation and takes turns announcing it to the group. The leader stands in the middle of the group with the ball at their feet. The leader will call out one of the nations. On a signal, the student whose nation is called runs in the middle, grabs the ball and yells, "STOP." All other students will run away from the circle until the nation called yells "STOP." The nation who is called will try to hit the students on the waist or below. The student who is hit will then get the ball and attempt to hit another player. Players may not move or try to avoid being hit by the ball. When one player throws the ball and misses another player, the ball returns to the center of the circle and players return to the edge of the circle. The last person to get hit becomes the new leader and the game starts again. Give penalty points for breaking rules, for missing when throwing, and for getting hit when missing the ball. When all players reach ten points the game is over.  
**Adaptations:**
  - If your school has policies against throwing the ball at others, you can have the student catch the ball.
  - You can develop a different point system.
  - You can substitute countries for states, presidents, or any other concept that requires memorization.**Reference:** (Barbarash, 1997)

#### **Hopscotch (Germany, England)**

- Content Area:** All  
**Age:** 5 and up  
**How Many Players Required:** 2 or more players  
**How to Play:** Teacher will mark boxes in a T shape, the number of boxes depending on

the number of ordered concepts. Inside the boxes the teacher may mark days of the weeks or numbers. The first student will throw a stone to mark their “house.” The student must jump one footed through the boxes without stepping on the lines, outside of the boxes, without missing a box, and without putting the second foot down, both up the boxes and back down the boxes. If the player is successful the “House” remains theirs for the entire game. The next player will go marking their box, skipping over other players’ houses. The last person out wins.

**Adaptations:**

- Teacher can change the concepts into the boxes to help students learn concepts like spelling, groupings of numbers, etc.
- Teacher can have students call out each box to help solidify concepts.

**Reference:**

(Barbarash, 1997)

### Triangle Game (Greece)

**Content Area:**

Math

**Age:**

6 and up

**How Many Players Required:**

2 or more players

**How to Play:** Teacher will draw a triangle on the ground. The teacher will split the triangle into three equal parts horizontally. Each section will be awarded points. Students will take turns throwing 3 markers in each section in one turn. The next student can try to knock out the other students’ stones. After every player has had their turn, students will total up their points depending on where their stones fell. Once a player reaches 50 points, the game is over.

**Adaptations:**

- Teacher can vary the shape and sections of the game board.
- Teacher can vary the point system making one section worth double the points. Also, teacher may have students randomly pull special stones that are worth double or triple points.

**Reference:**

(Barbarash, 1997)

### Tug-O-War

**Content Area:**

History

**Age:**

10 and up

**How Many Players Required:**

Preferably 10 or more

**How To Play:** Students will first take a stand in an argument. Students will try to convince their classmates with evidence to come to their side of the argument. After time is up, each side of the argument takes a side of the rope and plays Tug-O-War.

**Adaptations:**

- Teacher can change the details of the debate

**Reference:**

(Jensen, 2005, p. 66)

### Relay Teams

**Content Area:**

All subject areas

**Age:** 5 and up  
**How Many Players Required:** Ten or more players  
**How to Play:** Students will form two lines. The student in the front of the line will hold fly swatters. The teacher will read a question. The two students in the front of the line will answer the question by slapping the fly swatter down to signal they have the answer. If the student who was the quickest with the fly swatter answers correctly, they get a point. If not the two go to the back of the line and the next players come up.  
**Adaptations:**

- Teacher can instead have two question askers in the front of the line. When the teacher says go, the question askers will read the questions. If the students answer correctly the team gets a point. If they answer incorrectly they do not. The student can also pass. The faster the team the more questions the team can answer in the time allotted. Fly swatters would not be required.
- Teachers can have several rounds where each round is a different subject matter.

**Reference:** Mandy Paradise

### Charades

**Content Area:** English, Vocabulary  
**Age:** 6 and up  
**How Many Players Required:** 6 or more  
**How to Play:** Students will form two teams. Each team will pick an actor. The actor will choose a vocabulary card. The actor has one minute to act out the vocabulary word while his/her teammates try to guess what the word is. If the team guesses correctly, they score a point and the next team goes. If the clock runs out of time and the team has still not guessed correctly, the other team has one guess and gets a point if they guess correctly.  
**Adaptations:**

- Teacher can use words or phrases from all content areas as prompts.

**Reference:** Combination of resources

### Guess the Chemical Compound

**Content Area:** Science  
**Age:** 10 and up  
**How Many Players Required:** Whole class preferred  
**How to Play:** Students will be broken up into two groups. The game is played similarly to charades. A few students in the group will be given a card with a chemical compound. The students must create the chemical compound acting as particular components. To make it easier each student can be assigned a component. The other team members must guess what the chemical compound is. If they guess correctly they score a point. If they guess incorrectly the next team gets one chance to guess, if they guess correctly they score a point, if not, they will not. The next team will then model the next chemical compound.  
**Adaptations:**

- The teacher can use this game to help students learn mathematical theories. Students can represent different parts of the Pythagorean theory for instance.

**Reference:** (Campbell, 1996)

### **Multiple Choice Winner**

**Content Area:** All

**Age:** All

**How Many Players Required:** 2 or more

**How to Play:** Students will splint into two groups. Teacher will have drawn a large box in four or more sections on the ground with tape or chalk. The teacher will read the question and possible choices. The group as a whole will have to move into the correct corresponding box. The team will have one minute to discuss their answer. If they are correct they get a point. The next team will then go.

**Adaptations:**

- The teacher can choose to have only one student represent the group. The teacher can read the category, the students can choose a representative, the teacher can read the questions giving the options, and the student can answer the question.

**Reference:** (Campbell, 1996)

### **Brain Teasers**

#### **Secret Codes**

**Content Area:** English, Spelling, Math

**Age:** 6 and up

**How Many Players Required:** 1 player

**How to Play:** Students will create a key that matches each letter of the alphabet to a symbol. The students will write a message with the symbols. Students will trade and try to decipher the message.

**Adaptations:**

- Students can make messages or decipher spelling words.
- Students can create codes for mathematical equations making a letter equal to a number. They must decipher the problem, solve the problem, and then translate the answer back into a letter. Teacher may also make the answers spell something.
- Teacher can also create a grid with an x and y axis. The coordinate plan will be labeled with a coordinating letter. The code can be the x and y coordinates, where the student must use the coordinates to find the letter. The students must use the graph as it would be used in math, finding the across then the up coordinate plane (ex: (3,4) on the graph is the letter e)

**Reference:** (Quaglia & Fox, 2003)  
(Petreshene, 1994, p. 101)

### Madlibs

- Content Area:** English, Grammar  
**Age:** 7 and up  
**How Many Players Required:** 1 Player required  
**How to Play:** Have students either work alone or in a pair to create a story. The students will then omit the parts of speech (noun, verb, pronoun etc.). They will draw a line and then write the part of speech required below it. Students can then trade their Madlib with other students to fill out.  
**Adaptations:** •The required parts of speech can depend on the level and requirements of the age group.  
**Reference:** (Mitchell, 1995)

### Vocabulary Scrabble

- Content Area:** English, Vocabulary  
**Age:** 5 and up  
**How Many Players Required:** 1 or more (preferably large group)  
**How to Play:** Cut 3X5 index cards in half writing the alphabet on the cards. Each player or team receives a deck. The teacher will give clues about what the word may be. Without speaking the teammates must spell the word correctly.  
**Adaptations:** • The difficulty of the words can vary according to grade level.  
**Reference:** (Brown, 2007)

### Muggins

- Content Area:** Math  
**Age:** 9 and up  
**How Many Players Required:** 1 or more  
**How to Play:** Students will roll three dice. Using each number once, students will generate a number 1 through 36 using any combination of the four operations. Ex: If 2, 4, and 6 are rolled,  $2 \times 4 + 6 = 14$ . Once a number is used it cannot be used again.  
**Adaptations:** •Teacher can just write a number on the board for students to figure out.  
•Score can be kept by adding up the resulting numbers. Whoever gets the highest score wins.  
**Reference:** (Lach, 2005)

### Target Number

- Content Area:** Math  
**Age:** 10 and up  
**How Many Players Required:** 1 or more  
**How to Play:** Teacher can put a target number up on the board, the teacher will also give the students the numbers they must use to reach the target number. The individual or team can work to find out which operations must be used and in what order to find the target answer using the numbers given.  
Here's a few to get started: Target number: 5 Use the numbers 4,3,7,5 to find it  
Target number: 7 Use the numbers 6,8,5,2,4 to find it

Target Number: 24 Use the numbers 6,9,8,4,5 to find it  
Target Number: 12 Use the numbers 3,7,5,9,6 to find it  
Target Number: 5 Use the numbers 6,9,5,8,7 to find it  
Target Number: 21 Use the numbers 9,6,8,4,3 to find it

- Adaptations:** • Teacher can figure out a point system or can use this as a quick excursive.
- Reference:** (Petreshene, 1994, p. 137)

### Code Challenge

- Content Area:** Math
- Age:** 8 and up
- How Many People Required:** 1 or more
- How to Play:** Teacher will have the key below. Each letter will equal a point value. The students will use the key to spell words that accumulate the most points. A,B = 1 point, C,D,E= 2 points, F,E,G=3 points, I,J,K=4, L,M,N=5 points, O,P,Q=6 points, R,S,T=7 points, U,V,W=8 points, X,Y,Z=9 ex: the word Suspense equals 44 points.
- Adaptations:** • This game can be adapted by using the spelling words that the grade level is using.
- Reference:** (Petreshene, 1994, p. 144)

### Sparkle

- Content Area:** English, spelling
- Age:** 6 and up
- How Many People Required:** Preferably large group
- How to Play:** Teacher will use a spelling word. Sitting in a circle each student will spell one letter of the word. The last person will say “sparkle.” The next person is out and sits down or out. The spelling words continue until only one is standing.
- Adaptations:** • Teacher can substitute spelling words for any ordered concepts.
- Reference:** MIT student

### Lucky Lotto

- Content Area:** All content areas
- Age:** 5 and up
- How Many People Required:** Preferably whole class
- How to Play:** The teacher will ask the students to answer a question. The teacher will look who got it right. The students who got it right will put their name in a hat. The teacher can do several of these questions. Students may enter their name more than once. The teacher will then choose a name out of the hat. They are the winner.
- Adaptations:** • The reward for winning can vary
- Reference:** Mandy Paradise

### 15

- Content Area:** Math
- Age:** 5 and up
- How Many people Required:** Preferably whole class

**How to Play:** Students will sit in some kind of circle. The first students will choose to say one or two numbers starting with 1 and ending with 15. The student who is number 15 is out. The students will continue over again until there is one person left.

**Adaptations:** •Teacher can use different increments of numbers or increase the total.

**Reference:** MIT student

### Traditional Games With a Twist

#### **Mathematical Marbles**

**Content Area:** Math

**Age:** 7 and up

**How Many Players Required:** 3-4 Players

**How to Play:** This game is played in a similar fashion to regular marbles. Select a shooter marble and 3 or four different colors. The players will assign each color marble a number value (ex: 1 point for blue, 2 points for green, 4 points for yellow). The shooter must shoot out the marbles from the circle adding the out marbles to 21 exactly. The winner is the one who collects a score of 21 exactly. If the shooter goes over 21 they must subtract the point value of the marbles they knock out. If they miss 21 by subtracting they must begin to add again.

**Adaptations:** • The values can be changed

**Reference:** (Rattigan, 2006)

#### **Book Baseball**

**Content Area:** Reading

**Age:** 9 and up

**How Many Players Required:** 8 or more

**How to Play:** Divide the class into two teams. Create 3 bases around the classroom, plus a home base. Use the traditional rules for baseball. The teacher or “pitcher” will read a question that can either be answered by the title of the book or the book’s author. If the student gives one of the two they advance to first base. If they get two they advance two bases. The first “batter” in line tries to answer it. If the answer is given the student advances one base, if not the student is out and sits down, the question goes to the next person. After three outs the next team is up to bat. The game continues until everyone has had a turn.

**Adaptations:** •Teacher may adjust questions to fit curriculum content.

**Reference:** (Cook, 1997)

#### **Go Fish**

**Content Area:** English, Vocabulary, math

**Age:** 5 and up

**How Many Players Required:** 2 or more

**How to Play:** Use the traditional game rules for go fish, except there are words or math facts on them instead. Each player will get seven cards in their hand. The rest remain in the pond in the middle. Players will ask each other if they have a particular word. If they make a match they must put the word in a sentence before they can claim its points. If it is math facts they must match up the answers.

**Adaptations:**

- The number of cards in the hand can depend on age.
- Words and math facts can be dependent on age.

**Reference:**

MIT student

### Memory

**Content Area:**

Math, English, Vocabulary

**Age:**

5 and up

**How Many Players Required:**

2 or more

**How to Play:** There will be two sets of cards face down. One set on one side will have math facts. The other set on the other side will have the answers. Students will turn over one card on one side and one on the other. They must match the math fact to the answer. If it doesn't match the cards are flipped over and the next player goes. If there is a match the player collects the cards.

**Adaptations:**

- Teacher can change the math facts to vocabulary words. Students must match up vocabulary words and make a sentence out of them.
- Teacher can change the content of the math and vocabulary cards according to grade level.

**Reference:**

Combination of resources

### Twenty Questions

**Content Area:**

All subject matter

**Age:**

5 and up

**How Many People Required:**

1 or more

**How to Play:** A teacher will have an item in mind, for instance a country, a mathematical theory, or a vocabulary word. The teacher will say, "I have a country in mind...." The students will have 20 questions to guess the answer.

**Adaptations:**

- Teacher can use an large array of information.

**Reference:**

Mandy Paradise

### Balderdash

**Content Area:**

English, Vocabulary

**Age:**

9 and up

**How Many People Required:**

2 or more

**How to Play:** Students will be split into two groups. One group will be given a vocabulary card and the definition. The students will make up 2 other words and definitions. The students will read the words and definitions to the other group. The group must guess which one is the real word. If they guess correctly they will get a point. If not, they don't. The next team will go.

**Adaptations:**

- Teacher can request that students understand root words by requesting them to create words that have the same root word, or meaning.
- Teacher can vary the vocabulary according to grade level.

**Reference:** MIT student

### **Pictionary**

**Content Area:** English, vocabulary

**Age:** 7 and up

**How Many Players Required:** 6 or more

**How to Play:** Students will form two teams. Each team will pick a drawer. The drawer will choose a vocabulary card. The drawer has one minute to draw the picture while his/her teammates try to guess what the word is. If the team guesses correctly, they score a point and the next team goes. If the clock runs out of time and the team has still not guessed correctly, the other team has one guess and gets a point if they guess correctly.

**Adaptations:**

- Teacher can choose to include words or phrases from other subject matter.

**Reference:** Combination of sources

## **Game Shows/Competitions**

### **Battle of the Books**

**Content Area:** Reading

**Age:** 10 and up

**How many Players Required:** Whole class

**How to Play:** Teacher will break the class up into teams with 3-5 players in each team. All participants will have read several of the same books. The battle is made up of twenty questions, with 5 points awarded for a correct title, and three points given for the correct author. Each question should be answered in 30 seconds. Most questions should begin with, "In what book..."

**Adaptations:**

- Questions can be altered

**Reference:** (Cook, 1997)

### **Wheel Fortune**

**Content Area:** Spelling, math, all content

**Age:** 7 and up

**How Many Players Required:** 4 or more

**How to Play:** Teacher will put lines on the board the represent a set of words in a phrase. The teacher will tell players what the category the phrase fits. Each player will take turns spinning the spinner to find the point value of the letters chosen. While being timed, the player or team will choose letters in the phrase adding the point values. The players can guess the phrase, if they are correct they keep the points, if they are wrong they loose a turn.

**Adaptations:**

- Teacher can use the phrases to help solidify concepts taught in content area.

**Reference:**

(Cook, 1997)

### **Jeopardy**

**Content Area:**

All subject matter

**Age:**

8 and up

**How Many Players Required:**

Whole class preferred

**How to Play:** Working in teams the team leader will choose a category and dollar amount. The teacher will read the question. If they get it correct, they get the dollar amount and they get to go again. If they get it wrong it's the other teams turn.

**Adaptations:**

- The team can be told the subject, the team can then choose the person they think would best know the answer based on the subject. Teacher can also incorporate a think pair share.

**Reference:**

Combination of sources

## Improving Reading Through Assessment

Lynn Risenhoover

What we think reading is influences the way we teach students to read, so it is important to understand the nature of literacy. What's more, what we assess reflects what we value. The assessment plan that teachers and schools implement, subsequently has great learning power. Not only does it guide our teaching decisions, but it also contributes to the culture of the classroom. Because teachers develop unconscious ways of constantly rewarding by showing appreciation of what students say and do, Fountas and Pinnell (2006) believe that what teacher's value will influence what our students also consider important in their learning. This subliminal message reinforces the need to choose an assessment plan wisely; an assessment plan that not only reflects what we expect from our students but helps children master the standards required.

During my fall student teaching, my understanding that reading is a complex socio-linguistic process best experienced across curriculum within an interdisciplinary holistic framework was challenged. I was faced with a system that was data driven by school-wide standard based assessments. A general reading curriculum, *Open Court*, taught in all classrooms was being supplemented by a forty-five minute "tool time" reading intervention class. During the first two weeks of September all third grade students were grouped and sent to the class that accommodated their reading level based on student reading performance data interpreted from a general fluency assessment and from STAR Reading, a [standardized, computer-adaptive](#) assessment created by [Renaissance Learning](#), Incorporated. During this forty-five minute tool time, I had the experience of daily facilitating a scripted lesson from the curriculum *Reading Mastery*, with a group of eight students. We read a passage round robin, during which time I interrupted reading to ask scripted questions that specifically targeted student's ability to tract text. Students then filled in selected response workbook questions. Every Friday, I chose one of the passages to monitor their fluency rate.

This continued daily while students were also busy taking computer Accelerated Reading (AR) quizzes (a computer guided independent reading progress monitoring tool) to monitor their comprehension of texts they chose to read within their book level range during independent reading time. Based on a student's STAR Reading scores, teacher set individual book level ranges and reading goals to help each student select books that were appropriate to their zone of proximal development. A student received a specific number of points towards their pre-determined goal upon completing the quiz for a book. The number of points depended on the number of words the book contained, the reading level of the book, and how well the student did on the quiz. Students monitored their progress toward their goal by putting stars on a large wall chart. Indeed, computer progress monitoring systems were predominant in this school, for students also spent fifteen minutes three times a week on Success Maker (Pearson Digital Curriculum Reading Literacy Intervention) along with 15 minutes on Math Success Maker. But that was not all.

During staff in-service, much collaborative time and effort was spent analyzing WASL scores and considering curriculum accommodations to meet the reading and math needs of the students, grades 3 through 5. Sounds of Response to Intervention (RTI) echoed in the hallway. Consequently, the school decided to implement DIBELS (Dynamics Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) Oral Reading Fluency assessment by January 2008 and use the data to help them restructure their reading curriculum based on Response to Intervention 3 Tier Instructional Model.

I did not feel prepared for teaching in this acronym driven, data based decision making process. I wanted to learn more about RTI and DIBELS, but more importantly I felt that I needed to regroup. I needed to clearly define the reading process and look at how assessment can help students become better readers.

Assessment is a powerful tool if properly used to help students and teachers work together to learn effectively (Gregory & Chapman, 2007). It not only helps teachers accommodate their practices to better match the understandings and needs of the students but it can be a very empowering method to help students become accountable for and understand their learning process. Reading EARL 4. reads:

4: The student sets goals and evaluates progress to improve reading.

4.1 Assess reading strengths and need for improvement.

4.1.1. Apply strategies to monitor reading process.

4.1.2. Understand how to set grade-level appropriate reading goals.

Alas not only is it is an empowering motivating tool to help students self-assess, but it is our responsibility.

To determine an effective assessment plan for my classroom, I felt that I first needed to figure out how I could utilize the DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency assessment tool to facilitate student reading development. I wanted to understand how assessing fluency in the upper elementary grade levels could help the students monitor their progress in literacy skills. EARL 1.4.2. *Apply fluency to enhance comprehension*, stumps me, for I am still of the mind set that facilitating comprehension strategies helps a reader become more fluent. For this reason, I wanted to look deeper into understanding what fluency is, and what makes a reader fluent? Would it benefit students to monitor their own reading fluency? In addition, I wanted to understand how fluency fit into the total reading process so that I could utilize fluency assessments effectively along with other observational assessments of reading behavior to ensure I was meeting the unique affective, cognitive, and physical needs of the whole student.

To accomplish this task I met and interviewed Julie Zimmerman, Literacy Specialist (Bush Middle School) and Jennifer Clark, Assessment and Program Supervisor for the Tumwater School District, and Amanda Patton who is on the RTI committee in the Rochester School District to learn more about DIBELS and district reading intervention programs. Other sources included professional books, websites and video recordings.

Response to Intervention Instruction (RTI) is a three tier instruction model being promoted to ensure that teachers accommodate highly qualified research based instruction to meet the unique needs of all students (National Center for Learning Disabilities, 2008). The model uses assessment for three different purposes:

- All children are screened to identify those who are not making progress at expected rates.
- Curriculum data based measurements are diagnosed to determine what children can and cannot do in important academic and behavioral domains. Decisions about the use of more or less intense interventions are based on data analysis.
- Progress is monitored to determine if academic or behavioral interventions are producing desired effects. The individual student response to instruction across the three tiers of intervention will influence decisions about the intensity and duration of Interventions. (Response to Intervention: NASDSE and CASE White Paper on RTI. May, 2006)

As a result of RTI many districts implement the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) screening assessment three times a year (September, January, and May) to determine which students require intensive, strategic, or benchmark reading instruction, and then to monitor student response to the experience and ensure all students meet mastery. Measures chosen to indicate the student's level of literacy development and reading proficiency include: letter naming fluency (LNF), initial sound fluency (ISF), phoneme segmentation (PSF), and nonsense word fluency (NEF) for Kindergarten; LNF, PSF, NWF, and oral reading fluency (ORF) for first grade; NWF and ORF for second grade; and ORF for 3<sup>rd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> grade. Individual level of performance is based on research based grade level benchmark goals. (Good, R. H., & Kaminiski, R. A. Eds., 2002). Progress monitoring data can be entered on the DIBELS web site to generate graphs that can be used by students to judge their progress towards their goal.

**DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency (DORF)**, the predominant literacy assessment for third through six grades, is a standardized individually administered test that assesses a child's fluency and accuracy with text. The text passages and procedures are calibrated for the goal level of reading for each grade level based on research and the development of Curriculum-Based Measurements of reading. (Good, R. H., & Kaminiski, R. A. Eds., 2002). Fluency rate is measured by the number of correct words read per minute. Errors include word omission, substitution or hesitation for 3 seconds or more. If a child self corrects within three seconds the word is considered correct. Accuracy measures the percent words read correctly in one minute. DIBELS Retell Fluency (RTF) is also used to identify children whose comprehension is not consistent with fluency and prevent students from thinking speed reading without meaning is desirable or the intent of the assessment process. Following the minute fluency read the teacher asks the student to tell all about what they just read and the teacher counts the number of words the child retells that illustrate their understanding of the passage. Intermediate elementary grade levels rely heavily on DORF to monitor student literary progress for it is believed, that when fluency is disrupted, so is understanding.

The theory behind this is that a fluent reader must read accurately as well as quickly and effortlessly. Therefore a fluent reader is capable of translating letters to sounds to words and does not have to think about the decoding process so is free to process the meaning of text [Institute for the Development of Educational Achievement (IDEA), 2008]. Citing supportive research, Fountas and Pinnell (2006) concur that fluent phrased reading and comprehension are "*intricately and inter-causally connected to make up the complex processing system that readers do.*" Fluent readers see beyond individual letters, words, phrases, and sentences. Letters are seen in connection with other letters to form words, and words are treated as connected phrases that make sense rather than isolated items. A fluent reader is capable of using sentence structure and punctuation to support meaningful reading momentum, and stress words in a way that reflect the reader's interpretation of the author's thinking. In addition, familiarity with text structure provides a reader with understanding of how sentences flow together. This allows a reader to anticipate what will logically come next, thus maintaining forward momentum. Essentially, to read fluently the reader must engage in similar operations needed to comprehend.

Comprehending refers to the thinking readers do before, during, and after reading (Fountas and Pinnell, 2006). A fluent reader has to orchestrate comprehension strategies effectively. This process, they believe, entails a wide range of physical, emotional, cognitive and linguistic actions; which include the use of, what Fountas and Pinnell (2006) refer to, as the visible information in the

text print and art, and the thinking and the invisible information (reader's schematic understanding) that the student brings to the text during the act of reading (Appendix: Figure 1., *Summary of Visible and Invisible Information*). The fluent reader must access and use both visible and invisible information in a smoothly integrated way, without conscious awareness. Since the schematic understanding brought to the text is unique to each student, Fountas and Pinnell (2006) remind us that readers will vary greatly in their ability to process text. Each student's fluency performance will depend on: familiarity of the concepts in the text; familiarity with the genre or text type; their vocabulary; the number of known words in the text; the number of words that are easy to solve; and familiarity (accessibility) of language structure. Essentially, Fountas and Pinnell (2006) concur that most students should be able to read certain texts fluently and that the reading process breaks down as text become too difficult.

Subsequently teachers have the responsibility of matching texts to readers and helping students practice on just difficult enough texts (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006). Providing the student the opportunity to successfully process more difficult texts will enable the reader to cope with longer stretches of print with fewer pictures, more complex sentences, harder and more varied words, more difficult concepts, and full range of punctuation ( Fountas and Pinnell, 2006). Ensuring students choose appropriate books to read is, however, not always easy. At the beginning of the year, especially, many of the third grade students wanted to read "big chapter books".

Boushey and Moser (2007) developed and model how a teacher can facilitate students understanding of how to use a *good fit book* rubric.

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### I PICK

1.  I choose a book.
  2.  P urpose – Why do I want to read it?
  3.  I nterest- Does it interest me?
  4.  C omprehend- Am I understanding what I am reading?
  5.  K now- I know most of the words. (Boushey and Moser, 2007)
- 

They use the analogy of a good shoe fit to help children complete 1-3 to determine if the book or text chosen is interesting. Then, since Boushey and Moser believe it is often difficult for students to determine if they will be able to understand what the text is about and know most of the words, they model how to do this by first reading a difficult passage out of an Income Tax book. This process allows a teacher to show how one can read the words but still have no idea what the book is talking about. After which, they model the process with a book that is a good fit. They recommend teachers repeat this process using the "I pick" language a number of times. Children can use this rubric at literary stations and teachers can sample oral reading to check fluency as students move from one level of text to another. It is important, however, for teachers to use

authentic oral reading activities during these periodic assessments (Fountas and Pinnell, 2006) For example, Fountas and Pinnell (2006) believe that round-robin does not foster fluency but often facilitates instead a life-long fear of reading aloud.

Instead, Fountas and Pinnell (2006) specify that teachers can monitor reading behaviors during shared/performance reading, guided reading, and independent reading activities (Appendix: Table 1. *Assessment of Reading Performance*). They provide a detailed rubric that looks at six dimensions of fluency to help teachers obtain an in depth analyses of how a student processes text so that the teacher can facilitate appropriate guidance. The rubric assesses how a reader uses punctuation (pausing); reflects meaningful units of language (phrasing); places emphases appropriately on words (stresses); varies voice in tone, pitch, and volume to reflect meaning (intonation); and reads at an appropriate rate (rate). (Appendix, Table 3 and 4, *A Scale for Assessing Fluency*). It is important to determine the difficulty level of text for the reader before you assess for fluency. Fountas and Pinnell (2006) recommend that teachers use text which the student is able to read at 90-95% accuracy. For they stress you cannot accurately assess fluency if text is not within reach of student's abilities. In general fluency is best assessed on second reading. but if assessment takes place on the first reading, they recommend the teacher gives the student a brief introduction. Remember warn Fountas and Pinnell (2006), that you are rating this reading rather than the reader. Any individual might read fluently on one text and dysfluently on another. I cannot help wonder how sharing this rubric with students could not but help them understand what a fluent reader is. Would they benefit by monitoring their own growth in reading fluency?

Debbi Diller (2007) feels that rubrics help both teachers and students think through together what reading skills they are developing and which ones they might work on together or individually. During the Fluency Rubric DVD recording, Diller (2007) models how teachers can use a rubric she created during whole group instruction to facilitate student awareness and understanding of what a fluent reader sounds like.

### **Fluency Rubric (3<sup>rd</sup> Grade; Intermediate Level)**

1. Choppy reading; no stops at . , ?
2. Mostly choppy reading with a little bit of reading so it sounds interesting; some stops at . , ?
3. Some choppy reading but mostly reading so it sounds interesting; stops at . , ?
4. Reading so it sounds interesting; stops at . , ? (Diller, 2007)

Diller (2007) models how the teacher first asks each student to take time to read the rubric and then talk to your neighbor and discuss anything you noticed about the rubric. After students have shared their observations, teacher models each level in assessment rubric so that the students know what different levels sound like. At each level, the teacher asks students to describe in their words what her reading sounds like. Diller (2007) specifies that students can then assess their own fluency with this rubric by working in pairs, or independently at listening and recording stations set up within the classroom. This process is, she feels, an empowering and motivating way to help students internalize what becoming a fluent reader means. I am eager to try this to see what impact it has on our readers. For fluency is a difficult concept to conceptualize. The process requires that the reader orchestrate complex comprehension strategies effectively (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006).

To orchestrate complex strategies effectively, Fountas and Pinnell (2006) believe, the reader has to think within, beyond, and about the text. During this activity, the reader must maintain the process of text by coordinating, what they have identified as, twelve strategic actions

for perceiving, internalizing, and using the information. (Appendix: Figure 2: *Assessment Collecting Evidence of Literacy Processing Actions Across/Instructional Context*).

Maintaining fluency is only one of the strategic actions. Since we cannot see these mental acts of processing, Fountas and Pinnell (2006) suggest that teachers take the effort to observe students' reading behaviors as well as the talking, writing, and drawing they do as they act on the meaning they derive from their reading. Trying to get into the heads of our readers and assess for effective reading strategies requires that teachers facilitate diverse experiences that help students think about their thinking (Appendix: Figure 2: *Assessment Collecting Evidence of Literacy Processing Actions Across/Instructional Context*).

While student teaching, I observed how dialogue and reflection during class discussions, act-outs, and individual student writes helped keep me not only informed on where students were at in their learning, but it helped both the students and me become more aware of how we thought about our understandings. Assessing our thinking helped us learn. Spending more time talking about our thinking not just in literacy but across curriculum is being increasingly recognized as a powerful learning strategy (Roberts & Billings, 2008; Keene & Zimmermann, 2007). Keene and Zimmermann (2007) make clear how being metacognitive (thinking about our thinking) helps us dig deeper into our understanding of text which concurs with our goal, as teachers, to enable students to read with deeper, longer-lasting comprehension. Fountas & Pinnell stress that through text talk students can:

- Make meaning that is grounded in text.
- Work through their thinking as they explain what they understand.
- Seek a richer meaning of a text together.
- Revise their thinking.
- Reach for higher level thinking.
- Learn from and about one another.
- Become more engaged and motivated.
- Become more motivated.
- Become more independent.
- Take responsibility for their own learning and the learning of others. (Fountas & Pinnell 2006. p. 277)

Too often negative conclusions are formed about a student ability to comprehend or think critically. Keene & Zimmermann (2007) feel that the vast majority of students can and do think at high levels but what separates them is often the ability to write and speak effectively about that thinking.

The important thing to remember is that text talk needs to evolve around genuine conversation (Fountas & Pinnell 2006). Fountas and Pinnell (2006) recommend facilitating this skill initially during interactive read-alouds. During interactive read-alouds the teacher reads aloud to students; but both the teacher and the students think about, talk about, and respond to the text. Throughout this time teachers have the opportunity to assess for evidence of student thinking within, beyond and about the text (Appendix: Table 4 *Assessment: Talking about Reading: Observing for Evidence of Thinking*) and then accommodate and structure mini-lessons around comprehension strategies that students need help with. This process helps prepare student for small literature discussion groups (seminars, book clubs). Through intentional conversations we can help students develop a vocabulary they can use to talk to one another about text. For language about thought can be taught.

Keene and Zimmermann (2007) have designed a think-aloud instructional focus that provides students the vocabulary, skills and understanding to think aloud about how they comprehend text. Before a teacher models and facilitates student exploration of a specific metacognitive strategy (Appendix: Figure 3, Metacognitive Strategies (listening to the voice in your mind that speaks while you read) students are pre-assessed using Keene's think a-loud comprehension thinking assessment (Appendix: Tables 7 and 8, Thinking Aloud Oral Assessment ). The activity assesses student's thinking about a text by asking them to pause during reading to think-aloud (Keene, E. 2006). Five or so weeks later after the teacher and student have explored the strategy through different genres of text the students are assessed again with a different reading passage. I would like to extend this process and set up stations with Oral Assessment Rubrics that provided students the opportunity to share with each other their thinking about text..

This paper has clearly shown that there are many different ways to assess students reading effectiveness. I feel that I have just scratched the surface in accomplishing my goal to set up an effective assessment plan that motivates students to become avid readers. But it is a good beginning and one to build on. I have learned that fluency rate and accuracy could be an effective method to initially assess student literacy skill, including comprehension, if the concepts in the text were understood by the reader. (More in depth assessments would be needed to determine why the reader was having difficulty reading fluently). The problem with DIBEL Oral fluency assessment is that the passages read are calibrated passages that may mean little to the student. Also observations on the different fluency dimensions such as phrasing, intonation, pausing, stress, and integration, are not considered. However, because of the recent promotion of Response to Intervention, DIBELS is here to stay with us for a while. In that light, I believe it would be beneficial for student to be able to access the website and monitor their own fluency assessment.

Through this research process, I have also learned how I might integrate different assessments into my literacy curriculum. To accommodate my teaching to facilitate differentiated instruction I will create assessment tools that both the students and I can use to assess the way we think about different genres of text when we talk, write, and draw about our thoughts. I am excited to explore and practice this process further. I feel like I have just begun.

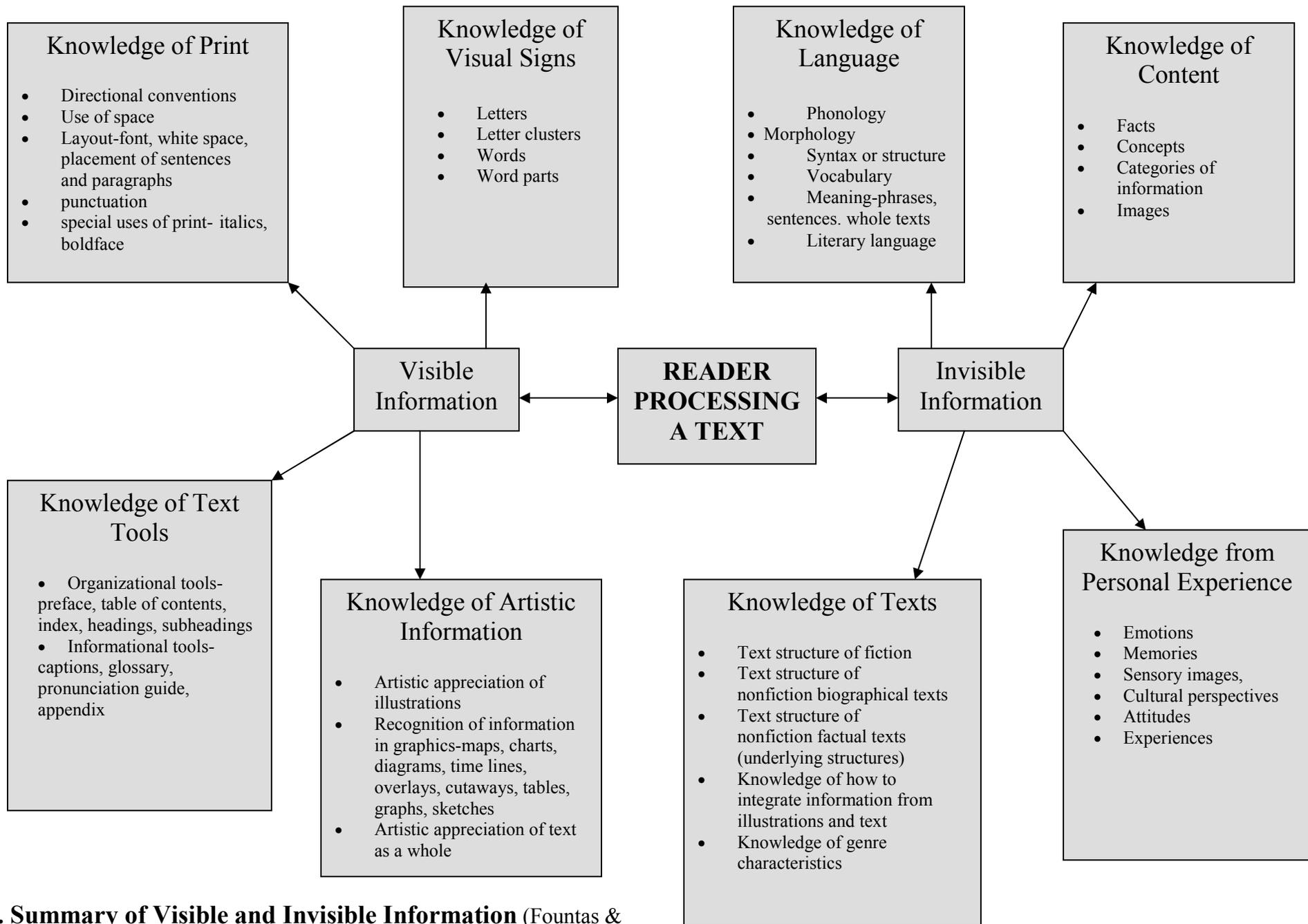
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## **Appendix of Additional Resources**

- Figure 1: Summary of Visible and Invisible Information, (Fountas & Pinnell. 2006)
- Table 1: Assessment of Reading Performance, (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006)
- Table 2: A scale for Assessing Fluency, (Fountas & Pinnell. 2006)
- Table 3. Using the Scale to Assess Fluency, (Fountas & Pinnell. 2006)
- Figure 2: Assessment Collecting Evidence of Literacy Processing Actions Across Instructional Context (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006)
- Table 4: Talking about Reading Observing for Evidence of Thinking, (Fountas & Pinnell. 2006)
- Table 5: Checklist for Book Club, (Fountas & Pinnell.(2006)
- Table 6: Assessment of Letters in Reader's Notebook, (Fountas & Pinnell.(2006)
- Table 7: Thinking Aloud Oral Assessment, (Keene. E. 2006)
- Table 8: Thinking Aloud Oral Assessment Rubric, (Keene. E. 2006)
- Figure 3: Metacognitive Strategies (Keene & Zimmerman, 2007)





**Figure 1. Summary of Visible and Invisible Information** (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006)

<b>Assessment of Reading Performance</b>		
<b>Context</b>	<b>Informal Assessment</b>	<b>Formal/Systematic Assessment Tools</b>
<b>Talk about Text</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interactive read-aloud and literature discussion</li> <li>• Book clubs</li> <li>• Guided Reading (discussion after reading)</li> <li>• Independent reading conference</li> </ul>	Observational notes Conference notes	Interviews
<b>Reading Behaviors</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shared/performance reading</li> <li>• Guided reading (reading the text)</li> <li>• Independent reading</li> </ul>	Observational notes Conference notes Audiotapes	Running records (miscue analysis) Records of reading behavior Benchmark assessments
<b>Writing in Response to Reading</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interactive read-aloud (written response)</li> <li>• Guided reading (extending the meaning of the text)</li> <li>• Book Clubs (preparing, note taking, writing in response)</li> <li>• Independent reading (reader's notebook)</li> </ul>	Written Products <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analysis in relation to strategic actions</li> <li>• Quality of products</li> <li>• Expression of personal thinking</li> </ul>	Writing to a prompt Formally administered teacher tests Standardized tests

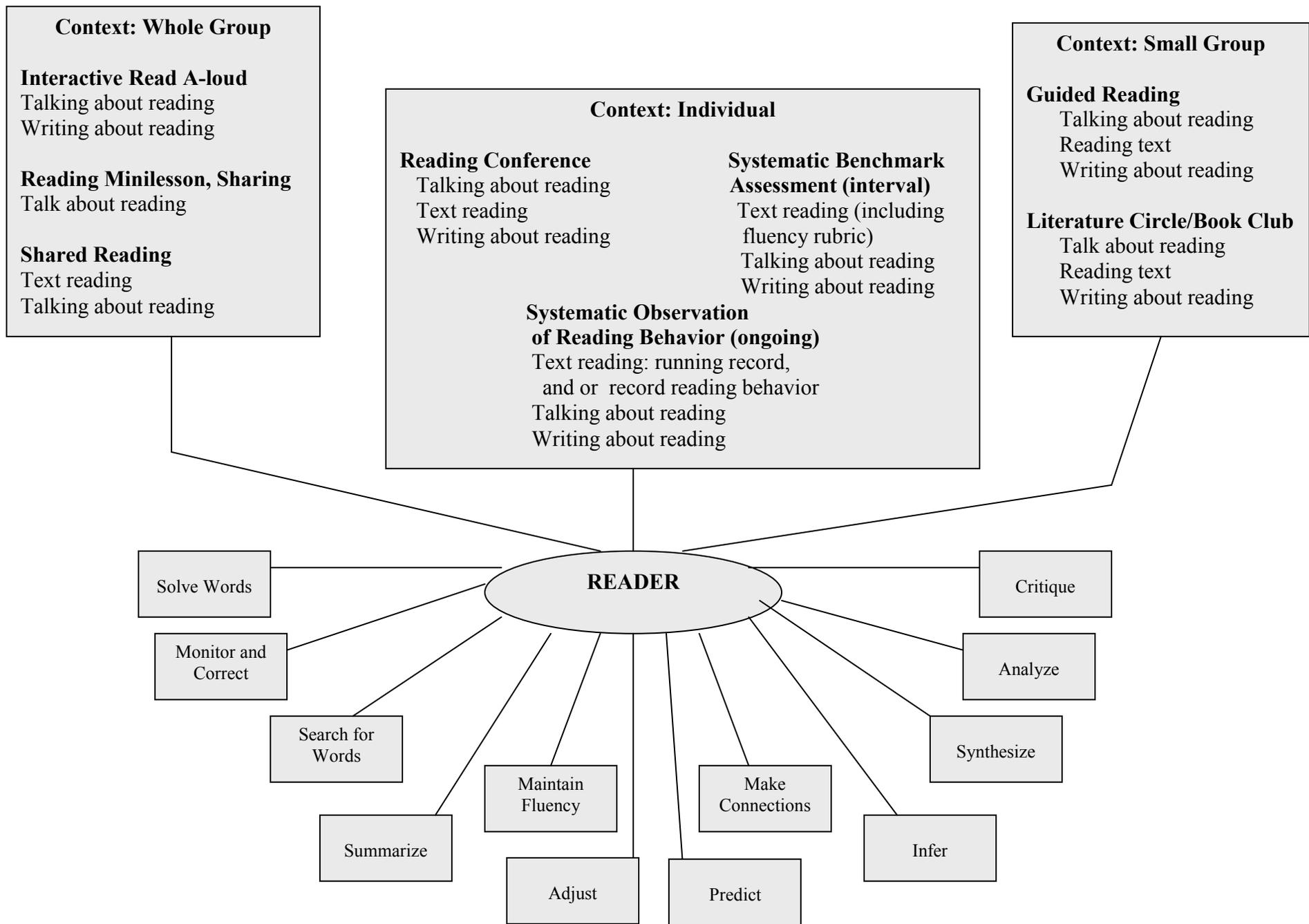
Table 1. Assessment of Reading Performance (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006)

Name _____		Level _____			
<b>A Scale for Assessing Fluency</b>					
<b>1</b>	<b>Rate</b>	Rate refers to the pace at which the reader moves through the text. An appropriate rate moves along rapidly with few slow-downs, stops, or long pauses to solve words. If a reader has only a few short pauses for word solving and picks up the pace again, look at the overall rate. The pace is also appropriate to the text—not too fast and not too slow.			
		<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
		Almost no evidence of appropriate rate during the reading.	Very little evidence of appropriate rate during the reading.	Some evidence of appropriate rate during the reading.	Almost all the reading evidences appropriate rate.
<b>2</b>	<b>Phrasing</b>	Phrasing refers to the way readers put words together in groups to represent the meaningful units of language. Phrased reading should sound like oral language, although more formal.			
		<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
		Almost no evidence of appropriate phrasing during the reading.	Very little evidence of appropriate phrasing during the reading.	Some evidence of appropriate phrasing during the reading.	Almost all the reading is appropriately phrased.
<b>3</b>	<b>Intonation</b>	Intonation refers to the way the reader varies the voice in tone, pitch, and volume to reflect the meaning of the text—sometimes called “expression.”			
		<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
		Almost no-variation in voice or tone (pitch) to reflect the meaning of the text.	Very little evidence of variation in voice or tone (pitch) to reflect the meaning of the text.	Some evidence of variation in voice or tone (pitch) to reflect the meaning of the text.	Almost all the reading is characterized by variation in voice or tone (pitch) to reflect the meaning.
<b>4</b>	<b>Pausing</b>	Pausing refers to the way the reader is guided by punctuation (short breaths at commas; full stop at ending punctuation or dashes). Pausing also refers to how the reader uses the way print is organized on the page (line layouts, paragraphs, etc.)			
		<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
		Almost no pausing to reflect the punctuation and the meaning of the text.	Very little pausing to reflect the punctuation and meaning of the text.	Some pausing to reflect the punctuation and meaning of the text.	Almost all the reading is characterized by pausing to reflect the punctuation and meaning of the text.
<b>5</b>	<b>Stress</b>	Stress refers to the emphasis readers place on particular words (louder tone) to reflect the meaning as speakers would do in oral language.			
		<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
		Almost no stress on appropriate words to reflect the meaning of the text.	Very little stress on appropriate words to reflect the meaning of the text.	Some stress on appropriate words to reflect the meaning of the text.	Almost all the reading is characterized by stress on appropriate words to reflect the meaning of the text.
<i>Provide an overall assessment of fluency below:</i>					
<b>6</b>	<b>Integration</b>	Integration involves the way the reader consistently and evenly orchestrates rate, phrasing, pausing, intonation, and stress.			
		<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
		Almost none of the reading is fluent.	Very little of the reading is fluent.	Some of the reading is fluent.	Almost all of the reading is fluent.

## Using the Scale to Assess Fluency

<b>1</b>	Find a readable text for the student, one that he or she can read with over 95% accuracy.  Decide whether you want to assess the first or second reading.
<b>2</b>	Provide a brief, standardized introduction to the text.
<b>3</b>	Ask the student to read a significant portion of the text aloud; or have the student read the text once in full and then read it aloud for the second time.
<b>4</b>	Follow along as the student reads, using your own copy of the text, and marking errors.
<b>5</b>	Check the reading for accuracy—noting whether it is above 95%.
<b>6</b>	Use the rubric to rate the reading along the first five dimensions.
<b>7</b>	Make an overall assessment of the students' fluency—dimension 6 which refers to integrating the first five factors.
<b>8</b>	Repeat the assessment for a group of students.
<b>9</b>	Analyze reading fluency to determine what students are doing and not doing.
<b>10</b>	Plan small and large group instruction to address areas of need.

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**Figure 2: Assessment Collecting Evidence of Literacy Processing Actions Across /Instructional Context (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006)**

<b>Talking about Reading: Observing for Evidence of Thinking</b> (Fountas & Pinnell, 2006)	
Context: ____ Interactive Read Aloud; ____ Literature Discussion; ____ Guided Reading ; ____ Other	
<b>Thinking Within the Text</b>	
Students/Group:	
Notices and discusses interesting vocabulary	
Recalls important information from the text.	
Summarizes parts of the text or the entire text.	
<b>Thinking Beyond the Text</b>	
Students/Group:	
Make predictions about what will happen.	
Connects the text to personal experiences.	
Brings background knowledge to the text.	
Connects the text to other texts.	
Infers cause and effect.	
Infers characters' motives and feelings; infers what the writer has implied.	
Identifies new information and incorporates it into present understandings.	
<b>Thinking About the Text</b>	
Students/Group:	
Notices aspects of the writer's craft.	
Notices the way the text is organized or structured.	
Evaluates the accuracy or authenticity of the text.	
Evaluates the quality of the text.	
Analyses or criticizes the ideas in the text.	

**Today in Book Club, I . . .**

- 1 Listened to others.
- 2 Looked at the person who was speaking.
- 3 Responded to many of the people who were speaking.
- 4 Asked questions of other people who were speaking.
- 5 Spoke loud enough for others to hear.
- 6 Talked my fair share—not too much and not too little.
- 7 Was polite to others.
- 8 Tried to include others.
- 9 Listened to someone who disagreed with me.
- 10 Used signals to get a turn.

**I thought my contribution was:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Usual
- \_\_\_\_\_ Better than usual
- \_\_\_\_\_ Not as good as usual

**My favorite thing about this book club meeting was:**

Fountas & Pinnell (2006)

## Assessment of Letters in Readers' Notebooks

ELEMENT	EXPECTATION	POINT VALUE	POINTS
<b>Response to Teacher's Questions/Comments</b>	<i>Provides a clear response to teacher or peer's comments/questions.</i>		_____
<b>Quantity and Quality of Thinking</b>	<i>Provides about one written page of thinking. Shares interesting content about the week's reading. Shares thinking within, beyond, and about the text.</i>		_____
<b>Support for Thinking</b>	<i>Uses evidence from the text or personal experience to provide evidence or support. Uses examples to support thinking.</i>		_____
<b>Use of Conventions</b>	<i>Title spelled correctly, capitalized, and underlined. Author spelled correctly. Complete sentences. Use of capitals. Use of punctuation. Best spelling. Legible handwriting.</i>		_____
<b>Format of Friendly Letter</b>	<i>Date. Greeting. Body (one or more pages). Closing. Signature.</i>		_____
<b>TOTAL</b>			<div style="border-top: 1px solid black; width: 100%;"></div> <b>100</b>

### Thinking Aloud: Oral Assessment

I want you to tell me as much as you can about the first few lines of this passage as you (or I) read it aloud. I am going to stop you during the reading so you can tell me what you are thinking as you read (or listen to me read).

Now, I want you to tell me exactly what you were thinking about. The important thing is that you pay attention and remember the story (or text), so that you can tell me what you were thinking about during the reading. You can tell me anything that the book makes you think about, any problems you had during the reading, and what you think it is about.

**Note** Identify logical stopping places, roughly every third or fourth page in picture books, and every two to three paragraphs in longer text. Read and stop and repeat the above procedure when you have read enough text to allow the student to think aloud.

### Inferring Oral Assessment

For narrative text: When you read (or heard me read) could you predict what was about to happen? Why did you make that prediction? Can you find something in the book that helped you to make that prediction? What do you already know that helped you make that prediction?

For expository text: In addition to what you have read (or heard me read) so far, what do you think the author wants you to know or learn at this point in the text?

Select an event or fact from the text that calls for a conclusion, opinion, or interpretation. Refer to the event or fact when asking the following questions.

What did the author mean by \_\_\_\_\_? What details in the text help you to know that? What do you already know that helped you to decide that?

What do you know about this text that the author didn't write?

Choose one of the questions below to ask the students:

- We have just talked about inferring. (Restate one of the child's conclusions, opinions, interpretations, or predictions and identify it as an inference.) What do you understand about this text now that you didn't understand before?
- Why do readers understand better when they infer? Why should readers infer? How does inferring help a reader understand a text

### Using Schema: Oral Assessment

I want to ask you some questions about what you think about while you (or I) read.

When you read (or listened) to the text, did it remind you of anything you know about or believe? What? Why did it remind you of that? (If student's response is no, ask, "Did it remind you of any experiences or things that have happened before?")

Are there things you know about your life, yourself as a reader, this author, or this type of text that help you to understand this book? How does that help you to understand better?

C. Choose one of the questions below to ask the student:

- We have just talked about what this book reminds you of. (Restate student's response.) What do you understand now that you did not understand before?
- How does schema or background knowledge help a reader understand a text while reading?
- How did thinking about your own schema or

### Asking Questions

What did you wonder about while you (or I) read this text?

What questions do you have now about what you (or I) read?

Choose one of the questions below to answer:

- We have just talked about the questions you asked during reading. (Restate student's response.) How do questions help you understand more of what you're reading?
- What do you do when you are reading and a question comes into your mind? Do questions help you understand some kinds of text better than others? Tell me more about that.

Table 7: Thinking Aloud Oral Assessment, Keene, E. 2006. *Assessing Comprehension Thinking Strategies*.

### **Determining Importance in Text: Oral Assessment**

Are there some parts of this text that are more important than the others? Which ones? Why do you think they are the most important?

What do you think the author thinks is the most important part so far in the text? What signals or clues did the author use to make you believe \_\_\_\_\_(restate student's response) was important?

Choose one of the following:

- We have just talked about parts of the text (restate student's response) that you feel are important. How does thinking about the more important parts help you to understand the text better?
- Do you think or do anything while you are reading that helps you remember the important parts?
- Do you ever have trouble remembering what is important after you read? How do you solve that problem?

### **Synthesizing and Retelling: Oral Assessment**

If you were to tell another person about the text you (or I) just read and you could only use a few sentences, what would you say?

When you were reading (or listening to me read), did you change your mind about what the text is about? Can you show or tell me where you changed your mind and why?

Think about what you have just said about the story. What do you understand now that you didn't understand before? What do you think the author wants us to understand about this text? What opinions and ideas did you form about this text during and after reading it?

### **Setting a Purpose for Reading: Oral Assessment**

What will this text help you learn about?

When would you read (or listen to) another text like this? What for?

Why would you pick this text to read on your own?

### **Monitoring Comprehension: Oral Assessment**

What problems did you have while you (or I) were reading this text? Did you have more difficulty reading the words or understanding the ideas? When you are reading at other times, what kinds of problems do you usually have?

What did you do to solve any problems you had? How do you usually solve the problems you have when you read?

How do you know when you understand a text? What would you tell another student to try if he or she has trouble understanding?

Choose one of the questions below to ask the student:

- We have just talked about the problems you have while reading and the ways in which you solve them. What is important to know when you have a problem while you are reading and (restate student's response)?
- What are the different choices you can make to try to solve that problem?
- What would you tell another reader who might not realize when a text doesn't make sense?

Table 7: Thinking Aloud Oral Assessment, Keene, E. 2006. *Assessing Comprehension Thinking Strategies*.

### **Visualizing (Using Sensory and Emotional Images): Oral Assessment**

When you (or I) read the text, did you create pictures or images in your mind? Tell me everything you can about the images in your mind during the reading. What details in your images are not in the words (or pictures) in the book?

Can you remember creating pictures or images in your mind to help you understand the ideas when you read another book? Tell me everything you can about those pictures or images.

Choose one of the questions below to ask the students:

- We have just talked about the pictures or images you created in your mind while I read. Do those pictures or images help you to understand the text better?
- How do images help you understand more about what you read?
- What would you tell another reader about how to create images to better understand a text?

### **Story Structure/Structural Patterns: Oral Assessment**

There are some parts of the texts you read that you find in every text. These are called text elements or structures. For example, there are usually characters, a problem, and events in a fiction story. I want to ask about text elements now.

In this text, did you find text elements or structures? What were they?

How were text elements or structures in this text used?

How did those text elements or structures help you better understand the text?

How can text elements or structures help you better understand any text you read?

**Table 7: Thinking Aloud Oral  
Assessment,**  
Keene, E. 2006. *Assessing  
Comprehension Thinking Strategies.*

## Thinking Aloud: Rubric

## Inferring: Rubric

1	No response/inference.
2	Attempts a prediction or conclusion that is inaccurate or unsubstantiated with text information.
3	Draws conclusions or makes predictions that are consistent with text or schema.
4	Draws conclusions and/or makes predictions and can explain the source of the conclusion or prediction in text.
5	Develops predictions, interpretations, and/or conclusions about the text that include connections between the text and the reader's background knowledge, ideas, or beliefs that enhance the overall meaning of the text and make it more memorable to the reader. Discusses why/how inferences help him or her understand better.

1	No response, random thoughts unconnected to the text.
2	Disconnected thoughts relating more to the pictures than text.
3	Thinking is tied to text events/text content; may be inaccurate in relation to text, more tied to personal experience; may identify problems (word or text level) during reading; may include a rough retell.
4	Demonstrates two or three of the following skills: may generate questions; may identify conflict within the text; may infer; may discuss connections between text events and own experience; may make predictions about overall book meaning; may include a detailed retelling; may talk about how his/her thinking changed as he/she read or listened.
5	Clearly expresses own thinking; may speculate about theme, discusses how own thinking supports or inhibits comprehension.

## Using Schema: Rubric

## Asking Questions: Rubric

1	No response/schematic connection.	1	No questions and/or poses irrelevant questions.
2	Can talk about what text reminds him/her of but cannot explain; reference to schema may not be clearly connected to text.	2	Poses literal question(s) that relate to the text.
3	Relates background knowledge/experience to text.	3	Poses questions to clarify meaning.
4	Expands interpretation of text using schema; may discuss schema related to author or text structure; may pose questions based on apparent discrepancies between text and background knowledge.	4	Poses questions to enhance meaning of text (critical response, big idea); may explain how posing questions deepens comprehension.
5	Explains how schema enriches interpretation of text; talks about use of schema to enhance interpretation and comprehension of other texts; connections extend beyond life experience and immediate text.	5	Uses questions to challenge the validity of text or author's stance/motive or point of view and to enhance his/her understanding of the text; questions may be rhetorical and lead to interesting discussion. Can explain how asking questions enhances understanding.

Table 8: Thinking Aloud Oral Assessment Rubric  
Keene, E. 2006. *Assessing Comprehension Thinking Strategies*.

**Determining Importance in Text: Rubric**

1	No response, random guessing, inaccurate attempt to identify important elements.
2	Identifies some elements (primarily pictures) as more important to text meaning; isn't sure why these elements are important to overall meaning.
3	Identifies words, characters, and/or events as more important to overall meaning and makes some attempt to explain reasoning in expository text; uses text features such as bold print and captions to identify importance; explains why the concepts are important.
4	Identifies at least one key concept, idea, or theme as important in overall text meaning and clearly explains why.
5	Identifies multiple ideas or themes; may attribute them to different points of view; discusses author's stance or purpose and its relation to key themes and ideas in the text.

**Synthesizing Patterns: Rubric  
Text Structure/Structural Patterns:  
Rubric**

**Setting a Purpose for Reading:**

**Visualizing (Using Sensory and Emotional Images):Rubric**

Table 8: Thinking Aloud Oral Assessment Rubric  
Keene, E. 2006. *Assessing Comprehension Thinking Strategies*.

**Monitoring Comprehension: Rubric**

1	Little or no conscious awareness of reading process.
2	Identifies difficulties--problems are
3	Does not often at word level. Little or no
4	Does not often at word level. Little or no
5	Elaborates multisensory and emotional images to enhance comprehension; can articulate how the process enhances comprehension.

1	Random or no response; may give title.
2	Identifies some text events—random or illogical order.
3	Synthesizes with some awareness of event sequence—beginning, middle, end, or the chronology of the text as it has been read so far. Understands that the sequence appears to aid comprehension; may talk about how he/she changed his/her mind about overall story meaning during reading.
4	Enhances meaning in text with synthesis; may incorporate own schema; uses story elements or structures to enhance the synthesis; may identify key themes; describes how thinking evolved from the beginning to the end of the passage.
5	Succinct synthesis using internalized story/genre/text structure; identifies key themes; may articulate how synthesizing promotes deeper comprehension—can articulate how flexibility in thinking throughout the piece promotes comprehension, talks about feelings the piece evoked.

**Retelling: Rubric**

1	No response; restates what examiner says.
2	Lists one or more elements/structures not named by examiner (i.e., character, setting, bold text, charts, graphs, etc.).
3	Points out where/how the author introduced a text element.
4	Describes how elements/structures in text are central to meaning.
5	Discusses ways in which text elements/structures focus a reader's attention, permitting the reader to recall important information and/or make inferences.

1	Random response; may be related to text; may give title.
2	Retelling reveals beginning awareness of event sequence.
3	Uses story elements/genre structure to organize a relatively accurate summary or retelling of story's beginning, middle, and end.
4	Story elements/genre structure are clear in an accurate summary or retelling; refers to interactions between story elements (how problem affects character, how setting changes problem, etc.).
5	Uses all story elements/genre structure and inferences to capture key themes in the text; points out relationships between elements; talks about how the overall meaning is influenced.

Table 8: Thinking Aloud Oral Assessment Rubric, Keene, E. 2006. *Assessing Comprehension Thinking Strategies*.

**Figure 3: Metacognitive Strategies:** Listening to the voice in your mind that speaks to you. (Keene & Zimmerman, 2007. p. 14)

- **Monitoring for meaning** – Knowing when you know, knowing when you don't know.
- **Using and creating schema** – Making connections between the new and the known, building an activating background knowledge.
- **Asking questions** – Generating questions before, during, and after reading that lead you deeper into the text.
- **Determining importance** – Deciding what matters most, what is worth remembering.
- **Inferring** – Combining background knowledge with information from the text to predict, conclude, make judgments, and interpret.
- **Using sensory and emotional images** – Creating mental images to deepen and stretch meaning.
- **Synthesizing** – Creating an evolution of meaning by combining understanding with knowledge from other texts/sources.

## **Advocating for High Quality Arts Programs in Schools**

Caitlin Robertson

### **Introduction**

As public schools in the United States face tighter budgets, the arts are often the first subjects that get cut from school curriculums. As a teacher who believes that the arts are imperative to student learning and success, I find it necessary that I acquire the knowledge and language with which to defend the importance of high quality arts programs for all students. This project examines and consolidates research which validates the importance of an arts-infused education. This summary of literature advocating for the arts will be useful to teachers working in schools that do not have strong arts curricula or are defending and improving arts programs that are already in place.

Part of the research for this project examined a government-funded arts program called Arts Impact. I will describe Arts Impact for the purpose of offering educators an example of a successful school arts program. The description is brief and I encourage interested readers to learn more about this program at <http://www.arts-impact.org>.

In researching Arts Impact I interviewed the director of the program, Sibyl Barnum, and communicated electronically with both artist mentors and teachers participating in Arts Impact. These interviews and conversations provided a deeper understanding of the program and its impact on students, teachers, and schools, as well as exposed the personal perspectives of some of the people involved with Arts Impact.

At the conclusion of this paper, I have included a page of resources for teachers who are interested in advocating for the arts. The page of resources contains links to information about arts grants available to individual teachers as well as whole schools. Links to websites relevant to the arts and helpful for teachers, administrators, and others involved in education are also included.

### **Justification for the Arts in Schools**

I am a teacher who believes that the arts should be a meaningful and necessary element to every individual's life and education. However, this viewpoint becomes problematic when trying to defend the value of the arts to a person who has not experienced an active study of the arts and does not see the intrinsic value in doing so.

According to arts education researcher Charles Fowler, the belief that valuing art based on an aesthetic philosophy is often at odds with the utilitarian view, which also seeks to justify a study of the arts (Fowler 1996). The utilitarian justification for studying the arts is based on the idea that the arts are of value simply because they contribute to human development and learning. Many utilitarian arts advocates believe aesthetic justifications of the arts in education are to blame for the tenuous state of the arts in general education due to their lack of basis in practicality (Fowler 1996).

Regardless of whether arts advocates have an aesthetic or utilitarian philosophy to support their justifications for the arts in general education, it is important that these philosophical differences do not become an obstacle to the essential goals advocates of both philosophies are trying to accomplish—to protect and support the arts in education. Rationales

defending arts education today tend to highlight the necessity of the arts for practical (or utilitarian) reasons in order to overcome current problems such as high dropout rates (Fowler 1996).

However, Fowler proposes that we “need a new and common cause for the arts, a new way to think about the importance of arts in education” (Fowler 1996, 37). As arts programs are eliminated from general education at a rapid rate, it is clear that the arts are not treated as fundamentally important, such as are math and science. As teachers, administrators, and districts formulate their justifications for arts education, they must recognize that intrinsic (arts-for-arts sake) and extrinsic (art for its practicality) values do not have to be distinct from each other (Fowler 1996). Arts advocates’ rationales will be more effective if they can target diverse audiences and socio-cultures.

Also recognizing the necessity of promoting the importance of arts in education, Dan Weissman examines the problem of schools serving low-income children that tend to cut out the arts out of necessity as they must focus on test preparation and basic skills (Weissman 2004). Weissman highlights the advantages the arts bring to disadvantaged learners when he describes Telpochcalli, a small public elementary school. Telpochcalli serves a high concentration of Mexican-American students, the majority of which speak English as a second language and or qualify for free or reduced lunch programs (Weissman 2004).

Rather than choosing a curriculum that emphasizes basic skills, Telpochcalli builds its curriculum around Mexican arts and culture. Teachers integrate arts into the curriculum, and students study art on its own and work with art, music and dance teachers on staff. Studies and test scores indicate that this art-infused curriculum is paying off (Weissman 2004). Between 1997 and 2002, student test scores at or above national averages in standardized reading comprehension at Telpochcalli more than tripled (Weissman 2004). Studies show that students who are not successful at reading by the end of third grade generally suffer academically and are less likely to graduate from high school (Weissman 2004). At Telpochcalli, only 18 percent of third graders are proficient readers.

However, by eighth grade, reading skills improve dramatically. Fifty-five percent of the school’s eighth graders test at or above their grade-level benchmarks. The longer students studied at Telpochcalli, the better they scored on tests. Contrastingly, a demographically similar school in the same neighborhood had only 26 percent of its eighth graders proficient in reading, and 27 percent of its third graders reading at grade-level (Weissman 2004).

The correlation between high quality arts and a strong academic program is evident at Telpochcalli and underscores Fowler’s statement that “the best schools have the best arts programs” (Fowler 1996, 46). Having explored further why this connection between successful academics and excellence in the arts exists, Fowler suggests that the arts provide students with a more comprehensive education. Multiple ways of representing, interpreting, and conveying our world are necessary because none of these ways on their own can give students the whole picture (Fowler 1996). Fowler further states that,

The arts—creative writing, dance, music, theater/film, and the visual arts—serve as ways that we react to, record, and share our impressions of the world. Students can be asked to express their own reaction to and interpretation of the Grand Canyon, using, say, poetry as the communicative vehicle. Whereas mathematics gives us precise quantitative measures of magnitude, poetry explores our various personal reactions. Both views are valid. Both contribute to understanding.

Together, they prescribe a larger overall conception of, in this case, one of nature's masterpieces (Fowler 1996, 47).

In addition to providing students with a more complete picture, the arts are also beneficial to students as they nurture different kinds of thinking (Fowler 1996). In other subjects of study, students are asked to come up with specific answers to questions, such as in true and false and fill-in-the-blank questions. However, the kind of reasoning that the arts invoke is much more prevalent in the real world, where questions may often be answered with more than one solution (Fowler 1996). Fowler contends that when students are allowed to creatively problem solve, they become more engaged with their learning processes, and they learn how to think critically as well as to discover and articulate their thoughts through many mediums (Fowler 1996).

Psychologist Howard Gardner would agree in the importance of educators encouraging students to express their thoughts in many mediums. Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences has helped to promote an awareness of the value of arts in education (Burnaford, G., Aprill A., & Weiss, C. 2001).

Gardner pointed out that of the seven intelligences he believed children to have, two tend to dominate the majority of formal learning environments—linguistic and logical/mathematical (Burnaford, G., Aprill A., & Weiss, C. 2001). This seems impractical if we acknowledge that many children have dominant intelligences in other domains. Gardner's theory suggests that if educators expand their teaching practices to include other intelligences, such as musical, spatial, intrapersonal, interpersonal, and bodily/kinesthetic, they will be teaching to all intelligences and thus will reach more children (Burnaford, G., Aprill A., & Weiss, C. 2001).

Beyond helping educators teach to all intelligences, Fowler notes that because the arts help students learn to think independently and promote creativity and imagination, they motivate students to learn. He also states that "these mental capacities are basic to America's success in the competitive global economy" (Fowler 1996, p 49). I argue that these mental capacities are paramount for American citizens to acquire in order to participate in a peaceful dialogue within a democracy and with the world.

In addition to developing the mental capacities to participate in the world as in a dialogue, the arts provide "a tangible and concrete means for students to work with each other and to work with adults in their world" (Burnaford, G., Aprill A., & Weiss, C. 2001, p 19). In this way, the arts encourage empathy and respect in students as well as a sense of community.

The arts give understanding a humanness (Fowler 1996). They do not communicate data but rather, give meaning. We can look at the arts as a "communications system that has allowed people through the ages to articulate observations, interpretations, and possibilities" (Fowler 1996, p 49). In this way, the arts can be used as a means of broadening historical understandings, as well as to compare historical periods.

Fowler also provides an example of how the arts can enhance understanding in science:

If students are studying the nature of our solar system and how the earth turning on its axis every twenty-four hours causes the sun to appear to rise and set, science can provide part of the truth about sunrises and sunsets, but the exhilaration we feel at the birth of a new day is another part of the meaning or truth of a sunrise. The British aesthician and critic Herbert Read once commented, "Art is the representation, science the explanation—of the same reality." That is, the arts and the sciences relate different aspects of that reality (Fowler 1996, p 51).

In this way, the arts help give meaning to other parts of the curriculum and give students a more complete understanding.

In addition, the arts help students develop cultural understanding—that of their own culture, as well as those that are foreign to them (Fowler 1996). The arts are one of the main ways human beings learn about and explore their identities. Music, dance, visual art, and theater express truths and histories about particular cultures, ethnicities, and communities. By putting students in touch with art— human expression, students develop empathy and are better able to communicate with people different than themselves, as well as recognize and celebrate similarities and differences that exist (Fowler 1996). The arts allow us to step outside of our own personal sensibilities, to experience a whole new knowing and understanding (Fowler 1996).

Because the human spirit is central to the arts, Fowler says that it allows students to see and to better understand themselves and others (Fowler 1996). Schools that recognize the fact that human beings are creatures of emotion and thoughts will be better equipped to prepare their students to live intelligent lives. Fowler also warns us to “remember that if we fail to touch the humanity of students, we have not really touched them at all. And schools that do not teach the arts are, quite literally, creating a generation that is less civilized than it could be, more barbaric than it should be” (Fowler 1996, p 55).

As high quality arts programs in schools become increasingly sparse, it is the duty of educators to protect, justify, re-instill and invigorate the arts educations the youth in the United States are receiving. This necessitates that teachers become articulate about the understanding and life skills that an education in the arts provides for students. In addition to becoming well versed in various justifications for arts programs in public schools, it is important for teachers to learn about the information that is available to them and their students such as fiscal, educational, and community resources (Burnaford, G., Aprill A., & Weiss, C. 2001).

If teachers know the language and have the cultural and theoretical knowledge with which to defend the arts, they will be working to protect the educations and livelihood of their students. They will also gain the confidence to convey to their principals, superintendents, school boards, and parents the idea that the arts are inherently important to every child’s education and provide a more complex understanding of the world. I recognize that this paper provides only a starting point for teachers to gain ideas with which to advocate for high quality arts in schools, but it is my hope that I have expressed the necessity of high quality arts in education.

### **What is Arts Impact?**

I chose to research Arts Impact, as it is a government-funded local arts program based in Tacoma, Washington. Arts Impact is presently a U.S. Department of Education Model Arts grant project, the purpose of which is to research the best practices for teacher training in the arts (Barnum 2008).

I am interested in the program’s focus on professional development in the arts that the Arts Impact offers to elementary teachers in Pierce and King Counties. Arts impact provides high quality arts education experiences to young students by training classroom teachers in artistic fields, and teaching them how to infuse their curricula with learning in the arts (District 2008).

Arts Impact is a research project that focuses on the inclusion of high quality arts and art teachers in public schools, and for which the Puget Sound Educational Service District and

the Washington Alliance for Arts Education (WAEA) work collaboratively (District 2008). The project offers a two-year training program to teachers who wish to enrich their knowledge of the arts, specifically in music, dance, theater and visual arts. During the teacher training, artist mentors work with classroom teachers to create “standards based arts and shared academic concepts through arts infused lessons” (District 2008).

Arts Impact also extends its art training to principal/school/community teams to create art plans that are implemented over the span of a few years. One goal of these plans is that they support teachers and help lessen the obstacles that exist between the participating school’s art curriculum and Washington State Essential Learning Requirements (District 2008).

Teachers and students are informed by way of assessments as to their growth in artistic endeavors. These assessments range in form from checklists, rubrics, self-assessment reflection, class critique, and portfolio performance selection (District 2008).

The student assessments are used to help guide the research for this program which helps improve arts instruction in schools (District 2008). After completing the two-year teacher training program, teachers return to their classrooms to teach the arts. The teachers then gather student learning assessment data so that Arts Impact may evaluate the success of learning in the arts (Barnum 2008).

The program began in 1999 in Pierce County, and it has provided high quality arts to over 200 teachers through its two-year training/mentoring program, as well as over 5,000 students (District 2008). The program was created in reaction to a survey conducted in 1997 by the Cultural Council of Greater Tacoma. This survey showed that only 21% of the teachers in Pierce County felt qualified to teach the arts. Because Washington State will require its students to meet Essential Academic Learning Requirements in the Arts in 2009, it was clear to the Cultural Council that it was necessary that more focus be given to training teachers in the arts (District 2008). Nine years later, the Arts Impact research project/program shows evidence of growth in educators’ confidence and competence in teaching the arts, as well as improved academic performance of elementary students (District 2008).

### **Resources for Arts Advocates**

<http://www.k12.wa.us> (OSPI)

- EALRS for Elementary Arts (Dance, Music, Theater, Visual Arts)

<http://www.arts-impact.org>

- High quality arts program that empowers K-5 classroom teachers to teach art

<http://www.aep-arts.org> (The Arts Education Partnership)

- Presents information on national and state advocacy in the arts, information about arts integration, publications, etc.

<http://www.artsedwashington.org>

- Information about programs serving Washington schools, news and publications, professional development opportunities

<http://www.ed.gov/index.jhtml> (U.S. Department of Education)

- Descriptions of policies on federal financial aid for education, grants available, current research, and key educational issues

<http://www.arts.wa.gov> (Washington State Arts Commission)

- Lists nonprofit arts and community organizations throughout Washington State
- Describes current research, training available, grants available

<http://www.tacomaartmuseum.org>

- Educational resources, art workshops, and teacher programs

<http://www.seattleartmuseum.org>

- Art programs, teacher resource center, lending library

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## **Building a Democracy-Based Learning Community**

Gregory Saunders

### **Introduction**

In classrooms around the country, students are subjected to the whims of their teachers, without having any say themselves in how they are to be educated, or the subject matter on which they will be educated. Many would agree that the education being distributed is for the student, it is intended for them, and therefore belongs to them. If we are to believe this statement, then why is it that students often have no say in their own educations? Why are students forced to attend classrooms in which dictatorial forms of government are the norm, while they remain powerless to affect any sort of sway over the curriculum or the rules by which they are governed? Is this preparing them for a future as responsible citizens in a democratic society?

In classrooms around the country, there are many students with special education designations who are being placed with their general education peers. It is becoming so common that it should be considered unlikely that there won't be at least one student in any given classroom with special needs. These types of classrooms are called inclusive classrooms, and special care and planning must be taken on the part of the teacher if all of the students' needs are to be met.

If teachers are willing to share their power with the students whose education they are delivering, as well as practice key strategies for working with special needs students, everyone will benefit. There is a wealth of information available to teachers who wish to implement these practices in their own classrooms, so I decided to create a summary of these philosophies as well as recommendations for practice to support my colleagues should they choose to make their own classrooms more inclusive and democratic. My body of research consisted of two books, one on democratic classroom management strategies and the other on inclusive classroom strategies, as well as several articles about democratic classroom management and one observation and interview of a teacher who runs her classroom in a democratic fashion. The following paper will be split into sections addressing democratic classroom management strategies and inclusive classroom strategies, and shall end with several lesson plans ready to be implemented at the secondary level. All students can learn, but a responsible teacher does what he or she can to effectively maximize the learning for each student. Democratic and inclusive classroom strategies are a good place to start.

### **Case for Democratic Classrooms**

Why should classrooms be run in a democratic manner? As with American society as a whole, our classrooms are composed of many different people in regards to culture, learning styles, wants, and needs (Landau, 2004). It is absurd to believe that an individual teacher with his or her own culture, learning style, wants, needs, and biases can manage a classroom appropriately and adapt curriculum effectively without input from those he or she is serving: the students themselves. Therefore, democratic strategies can be used to effectively serve each student in the classroom, as well as give students ownership over their educations.

In addition to democratic classrooms promoting ownership of learning, they reflect United States society as a whole. Much like how students have no choice over what society they are born into, they have no choice as to whether they go to school or not if they are born in the

United States. The Compulsory Education Act ensures this. If the duty of schools is to create an educated and responsible citizenry prepared to participate in a democratic society, should our schools not mirror the society for which students are being prepared (Landau, 2004)?

For these reasons, a democratic classroom is a worthwhile goal for any teacher. But it is not so simple and chaotic as letting students choose everything that happens in the classroom, in fact, a great deal of teacher discretion is warranted (Landau, 2004). A democratic classroom must have a proper physical environment, rules, management strategies, and grading strategies that align with a democratic philosophy.

### **Case for Inclusive Classrooms**

As stated in the case for democratic classrooms, any single classroom contains a diversity of students. As medical science advances and as new laws are passed, more and more of these students will have disabilities or be handicapped in some way. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act specifies not only that students with disabilities are entitled to a free and appropriate public education, but that they are entitled to an education in the least-restrictive environment, meaning that the push is towards including students with disabilities in general education classrooms when possible and appropriate. In fact, recent data from the U.S. Department of Education states that approximately three-fourths of students with disabilities currently are served by general education classrooms (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2004).

For teachers to be effective in their jobs of teaching every child in their classroom, it is necessary for them to understand different disabilities, best teaching practices, as well as specific practices for working with students with disabilities (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2004). While this paper will not address the information regarding the identification and attributes of various disabilities that students might have, it will instead focus on effective strategies for including those students and making sure that they are well served.

### **Constructing a Democratic Classroom**

If a teacher chooses to let a democratic philosophy guide his or her practice in the classroom, the first place to start is the physical environment of the classroom itself. In order for students to arrive in the classroom on the first day of school and feel that it will be a place where they have ownership and power, the atmosphere of the classroom must be welcoming. One way to start with this is to make the classroom visually appealing. Having various pieces of art around the room or having a bulletin board that is decorated are some ways of doing this. An especially effective way would be to have students help with the decoration of the classroom. This can even be done as part of instruction, with students who are visual learners and artistic interpreting the unit of study into a visual display. Having students help with the construction of the classroom will give them more ownership and help them to feel that the classroom is indeed a welcoming place (Landau, 2004).

Desk configuration is another important aspect of setting up the room for the year to come. In most classrooms, desks can be found arranged in rows facing the front of the classroom where the teacher will be most of the time. This reinforces a teacher dominated power structure. In a democracy, citizens should work together to meet the needs of everyone in the society, and this is true for a democratic classroom as well, students must cooperate and work together to maximize success. After all, the greatest cognitive growth occurs through social interaction (Gimbert, 2002). Having desks arranged in clusters allows for students to communicate clearly during group work. But the benefits don't end there! Groups of desks help both teacher and

student mobility around the classroom, students with physical disabilities are able to move easier and teachers are able to manage the class more easily as well. In addition, students who are learning the English language will have an easier time when they are in a seating arrangement that promotes peer interaction. Of course, if the teacher wants to be truly democratic, he or she can ask the students how they want the desks to be arranged and then follow their suggestion (Gimbert, 2002; Landau, 2004).

Of course, desk configuration is only half of the issue of seating, the other being a seating chart telling each student where he or she sits. A teacher shows respect for his or her students when he or she allows them to choose their own seats. Of course, issues of attention and chatter may arise, and this is why students should be made to mix up their arrangement every week. Not only does this still allow them choice in seating, but it makes for a more heterogeneous mix if students are told to sit next to other students who they have not sat next to before (Tuzzolino, 2008).

Once the classroom has been arranged in a welcoming fashion, the next important step in creating a democratic classroom is developing the rules. In the United States, citizens more or less have some say in the laws by which they are governed. This should be true of the classroom as well. Teachers can use their discretion to set a moral tone, but the rules should come from the students themselves. Teachers can provide some guidelines that the rules must fall under. For example, students have the rights to freedom, justice, and equality. These terms can be used to help design rules for the classroom, as can compelling state interests (health and safety, property loss and damage, legitimate educational purpose, and freedom from serious disruption of the educational process). However, any rules that are set for students should be followed by the teacher as well if the classroom environment is to be fair. This means no morning cup of coffee if students aren't allowed to have drinks. Finally, while rules should definitely be clear, they should not be inflexible, as teachers will often have to adapt to a variety of situations (Landau, 2004).

The rules that the class has developed should do a number of things. They should offer support to both the students and the curriculum. They should set a tone of positive expectations, not just punitive responses. The rules should create a balance in the minds of the students between their own rights and social responsibilities. The rules should also provide support for students who may not have information about assuming responsibility for their own actions. Once the rules have been created, it is important to touch back on them as the year progresses. Oftentimes activities will arise where it is important to revisit the rules that have been created, for example when going to the library for research, or when using expensive or fragile equipment (Landau, 2004).

One good way to revisit rules is through the format of the classroom meeting. The class meeting is in alignment with a democratic philosophy in that it gives all students power to discuss classroom issues and create solutions. When holding class meetings, some basic rules should be followed. An agenda should be created by either students or the teacher, but either should be able to add items if needed. During the discussion, depending on the problem discussed, it is important to not name names, but instead talk about the issues, thus maintaining a sense of safety for all students. Meetings are most effective when they remain focused on a single issue at a time, and of course, the teacher must respect student contributions. If the suggestions that students make seem like they wouldn't work, the teacher should explain his or her concerns without disrespecting the student or his or her ideas. The length of a classroom

meeting should match the attention span of the students, from ten to thirty minutes in an Elementary classroom and up to the whole period in a secondary (Landau, 2004).

Once rules have been established, the next task for the teacher is to manage the classroom in a way that aligns with a democratic philosophy. If a teacher wants his or her classroom to be a place where power is shared by teacher and students, then power struggles must be avoided. Using inclusive language can help reduce the occurrence of power struggles while promoting equity and not singling out students. Instead of singling out students and focusing on *them* as the problem, the teacher should focus on correcting the behaviors and avoid accusations. This all helps to ensure that the student feels he or she has permanent value (Landau, 2004).

When students do break the rules, the teacher should individualize the consequences, because much like with the issue of grading, equality does not translate to fairness. Remember, it is up to the teacher to be a mentor to his or her students, not a judge and jury. In fact, before dishing out consequences, a teacher should always try to gain a broader perspective by keeping the following things in mind: as a mentor, he or she should listen to the student and hear his or her side of the story; the student is growing into an adult but is not there yet; and that the teacher should take this opportunity to help the student learn from his or her mistake (Landau, 2004).

Consequences that are developed should be meaningful, and a simple process can be followed to ensure this:

1. Ask questions to find out what might be motivating the student's behaviors.
2. Determine a time to meet and speak with the student to reach a mutually agreeable solution to the problem.
3. Use a follow-up conference to see how the student is doing and to continue building a trust relationship with the student. (Landau, 2004, p. 105)

Teachers should always make sure that the consequences they use are confidential and leave the student feeling respected and dignified. The consequences should focus on restitution, and may require some creativity on the part of student and teacher when developing them. For example, actually fixing the situation if it has a practical solution, a sincere apology (written or oral), counseling, time to cool down, or if necessary loss of privileges (keeping in mind that recess and the lunch hour are *not* privileges) (Landau, 2004).

While consequences and classroom management are both major parts of running a democratic classroom, one of the most important and somewhat controversial issues that teachers face is grading. A teacher who wants to use grades fairly in a democratic fashion should use grades to provide feedback about the work completed, and the grade should reflect what the student has learned, not if he or she was late to class, followed the rules, or turned all his or her assignments in on time. However, in reality, grades serve more purposes than just reflecting what a student has learned. A grade can impact a student's present and future grade placement and course opportunities, acceptance into college, employment opportunities, and peer and family relationships, so grading should not be taken lightly (Landau, 2004).

With those ethical aspects of grading in mind, a teacher should also consider that there are other ways of reflecting student academic progress like portfolios or scoring guides. Grades should not be used to reward or punish behavior, and they should always be kept confidential (Landau, 2004).

## **Strategies for an Inclusive Classroom**

When working in an inclusive classroom (as most teachers will be), some of the suggested strategies for a democratic classroom might need to be adapted or changed to meet the needs of the students in the room. For instance, when setting up the room, keep in mind the needs of students who have learning disabilities (distraction free), or students who have physical disabilities (space to move) or hearing impairments (able to see, good acoustics). Proper placement in the room for these students can be critical to their academic success (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2004).

If a classroom is receiving a new student who has a severe disability such as mental retardation, it would be prudent to hold a classroom meeting before the student arrives to talk about his or her disability with the class. This helps clear any questions or misconceptions before the student arrives, and the class can work together to make sure that the new student is accepted socially (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2004).

When serving students who have special needs, the teacher will inevitably come into contact with other professionals who have a stake in the education of these students. Teachers should prepare to cooperate with parents, paraprofessionals, special education teachers, and interpreters in a way that best meets the needs of the student. If there is someone scheduled to be in the teacher's room to work with the student, it is best to collaborate and plan ahead of time so that everyone knows what they are to be doing so that no time is wasted and effectiveness of instructional time is maximized (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2004).

There are many specific adaptations that a teacher can make for students with specific needs, but there are also practices which have shown to be effective for *all* students. In a study done by Larrivee (1985), he concluded that effective teaching strategies for all students could be effectively broken down into the following four categories:

1. Classroom management and discipline (including efficient transitions, limited negative responses, maximized engagement rates)
2. Feedback during instruction (including providing positive feedback, avoiding criticism)
3. Instructional appropriateness (including appropriate task difficulty, high rate of correct responses)
4. Supportive environment (including using supportive interventions, responding supportively to problems, using punishment infrequently). (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2004, p. 167)

Teachers who ensure that their teaching style and classroom provide for all of these help to ensure that the needs of all of their students will be met.

## **Conclusion**

Whereas students in the United States have no choice over whether they attend school or not, teachers have no choice over the diversity of abilities that will be represented in their classrooms. The responsibility to make the best of the situation lies mostly on the teacher. Adopting a power sharing democratic classroom management system should greatly improve the level of respect and engagement in the classroom, and inclusive strategies will help to ensure success for students with special needs. This paper serves as merely an overview of both, and it is highly recommended for teachers to do their own outside research to find out as much about

democratic and inclusive strategies as they can to ensure their successful implementation in their classrooms. It will all be well worth it in the end.

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## **Appendices**

A. Democratic Classroom Practice Checklist

B. Lesson Plan Sample

C. 'I Am' Poem

## **Appendix A: Democratic Classroom Practice Checklist\***

### **Environment:**

- Decorated bulletin board
- Desks in clusters
- Could allow students say in how desks are arranged
- Constantly fluctuated seating chart, based on student choice

### **Rules:**

- Teachers must follow as well as students
- Moral tone comes from teacher. Rules come from students
- Use compelling state interests as a framework (health and safety; property loss and damage; legitimate educational purpose; freedom from serious disruption to the education process)
- Use a language of expectations
- Teachers must use discretion in enforcing rules, they shouldn't be inflexible
- Rules should support students and the curriculum
- Teach an understanding of rights balanced against social responsibilities
- Provide support for students who may lack information about assuming personal responsibility for their actions
- Must be revisited as the year goes on.
- When students aren't following rules, ask them what the expectations are rather than just telling them.

### **Classroom Meetings:**

- Must be short and focused
- Have an agreed upon agenda
- Discuss issues, not people
- Determine expectations for classroom meetings

### **Power Struggles:**

- Reduce power struggles through inclusive language
- Ensure permanent value of students by avoiding accusations, focusing on correcting behaviors, not individuals, and by ensuring every student has equal opportunity to succeed.
- Room should be arranged for easy movement to diffuse disruptions by proximity
- Backing off from a power struggle is professional because it encourages everyone to calm down and presents a calm role model

### **Consequences:**

- Must be individualized, fair is not equal
- Teacher should be a mentor, not a judge and jury
- Procedural due process before removing students from the class:
  - Notice: Students have the right to know the rules and how to meet those expectations
  - Fair Hearing: Students have the right to tell their side of the story before an educator makes a decision to remove them from the classroom.
  - Appeal: Students have the right to a full appeal, including legal representation, if they are facing expulsion

- A process for developing meaningful consequences:
  - Ask questions to find out what might be motivating student behaviors.
  - Determine a time to meet and speak with the student to reach a mutually agreeable solution to the problem.
  - Use a follow-up conference to see how the student is doing and to continue building a trust relationship with the student.
- Don't blame students for their personal circumstances
- Diffuse minor disruptions before they become major (don't ignore)
- Should maintain positive value and dignity
- Should be used as a moment to teach responsibility and coping mechanisms
- Things to consider before using consequences:
  - You are this student's educator and mentor, you had better listen and act as a loyal advisor
  - This student is in the process of growing to adulthood
  - You must decide what to do to help them learn from their mistake
- Keep consequences confidential by:
  - Moving close to students who are acting out and speaking quietly with them
  - Finding a time and place to continue the conversation if necessary
  - Keeping behavioral information off chalkboards and bulletin boards
- Use creative consequences in which the goal is restitution. For example:
  - Have the student fix the problem he or she created
  - Have the student give a sincere apology
  - Give the student time to cool down
  - Take away privileges from the student (lunch and recess aren't privileges)
  - Provide counseling for the student if necessary

### **Using Conferences to Resolve a Problem:**

- Steps of conferences:
  - State the problem
  - Ask for the student's perspective of the problem
  - Listen actively
  - Try to solve the problem
  - Agree to the terms
  - Follow up later
- Problem solving and conflict resolution steps:
  - Describe what you want
  - Describe how you feel
  - Describe the reasons for your wants and feelings
  - Taking the other's perspective and summarizing your understanding of what the other person wants, how the other person feels, and the reasons underlying both.
  - Inventing three optional plans to resolve the conflict that maximize joint benefit
  - Choose one plan and formalize agreement with a handshake

## Grades:

- Grades should be fair, accurate reflections of work done, not home life.
- Grades as liberty issues:
  - Grades impact the present and future grade placement and course opportunities open to students.
  - Grades impact the colleges open to students
  - Grades impact the employment opportunities open to students
  - Grades impact peer and family relationships
- Ethical aspects of grading:
  - Grades reflect what a student knows, not who a student is
  - Grades do not victimize students because of their personal or financial circumstances (for example, missing or late work)
  - Grades are viewed as a means of informing students as to their academic achievement rather than as a means of gate keeping.
- Better to not grade homework, as the teacher cannot be certain who did the work
- Keeping grades confidential:
  - Write grades on the inside or back of student papers
  - Always record grades yourself
  - Never post student work without permission. Always cover their names
  - Use private notes or conversations to discuss missing assignments with students
- What grades are and what they aren't:
  - Grades are one way to reflect the academic progress of students. Grades are not a means of punishing behavior.
  - Grades are one way to let students know when they are achieving well academically. Grades are not a reward for good behavior.
  - Grades are one key element of a student's future. Grades cannot be viewed as only one classroom, one course, or one grading period.

\*Checklist consists of paraphrased and quoted excerpts from Barbara Landau's *The Art of Classroom Management: Building Equitable Learning Communities*. (2004)

**Appendix B: Lesson Plan**

<p><b>Lesson Plan Title: Constructing a Democratic Classroom, Day 1 of 4</b></p>	<p><b>Key Concept(s) in this lesson</b> Equity Equality</p>
	<p>Equality would be giving everyone the same amount of food, regardless of individual hunger. Equity would be giving everyone a proportional amount of food depending on individual hunger, so that in the end they would all be equal.</p> <p><i>Also, what metaphor or analogy can you use to help students grasp concept?</i></p>
<p><b><u>WHAT YOU WANT STUDENTS TO KNOW, BE ABLE TO DO, OR FEEL/UNDERSTAND</u></b></p>	
<p><i>Lesson goal(s)</i></p>	
<p>The goals of this lesson are to begin developing community within the classroom and to set up a democratic power sharing structure, while getting to know the students at the same time.</p>	
<p><i>Specific Objectives for unit</i></p>	
<p>Students will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work together to define a working set of classroom rules</li> </ul>	
<p><b><i>Standards addressed (EALRs, GLEs)</i></b></p>	
<p>Communication: 2. The student uses communication skills and strategies to interact/work effectively with others.</p>	
<p>Primary Learning targets: which of these, a-e? (Be sure learning activities are congruent with targets chosen.)</p>	
<p><b>a/ Knowledge   b/ Reasoning Proficiency   c/ Performance Skill   d/ Create a Product   e/Disposition</b></p>	
<p><b><u>HOW WILL YOU KNOW THAT THE LEARNING TARGETS WERE MET?</u></b></p>	
<p><b>Pre-assessment: [What do they “know” already?] Attach any applicable instrument</b> None used</p>	
<p><b>Formative Assessment.(s) [Are they getting it along the lesson?] (e.g. planned comprehension)</b> Attach any applicable instruments.  None used</p>	
<p><b>Summative Assessment [Did they get it?] – end of lesson or unit. Attach any applicable instrument</b></p>	

None used	
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**TEACHING STRATEGIES:**

<b>SCRIPTED strategic teaching questions you will ask students</b> <b>Where do you see democracy in the real world? Where should you see it?</b> <b>What does community mean?</b>	
<u>Instructional Materials Needed</u>	<u>room arrangement:</u> Clusters of desks to enable group work.

<p><b>Accommodations: (e.g. ELL students, special needs, 504, etc.)</b></p> <p>Use of visual language to back up oral language, seating and other accommodations as appropriate to specific class.</p>
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<i>Time</i>	<i>What the teacher does:</i>	<i>What the students do:</i>
2	<i>Intro activity: (include the "hook"</i> <i>(e.g. disequilibrating experience)</i>	

minutes	-Welcome students into the class. Tell them to sit wherever they want as long as they are next to someone that they don't know very well.	- Take seats, trying to sit next to people they don't know very well.
About 10 minutes	- Instruct students to find a partner who is sitting next to them. Instruct them to share with their partner information about themselves that somebody who knew them very well would know about them. The teacher will find a partner as well and share.	-Find partner and share with personal details with them.
About 30 minutes	- Once students are done sharing, recollect their attentions and ask each partner to share what it was that their partner shared with them. The teacher should take note of any special skills or aptitudes noted during this process and invite them to be shared with the class when curriculum allows.	- Share with the class what they learned about their partner.
1 minute	- Share the three cardinal rules with the class: 1. Take responsibility for your own choices," 2. "This is a safe place," 3. "No racist, ethnic, sexist, or homophobic remarks."	-Ask questions if necessary, otherwise listen attentively.
5 minutes	- Explain to students that no one is able to choose what life they are born into, and thus their life situations should not be held against them or mocked in any way in the classroom. In addition, tell students that they don't know the deep personal secrets of everyone in the classroom, nor do they know everything about each students' (and the	-Ask questions if necessary, otherwise listen attentively.
Rest of class		- Play the name game.

**Appendix C**

I AM POEM

I am \_\_\_\_\_  
I feel \_\_\_\_\_  
I touch \_\_\_\_\_  
I smell \_\_\_\_\_  
I see \_\_\_\_\_  
I hear \_\_\_\_\_  
I am \_\_\_\_\_

I am \_\_\_\_\_  
I want \_\_\_\_\_  
I need \_\_\_\_\_  
I love \_\_\_\_\_  
I hate \_\_\_\_\_  
I laugh \_\_\_\_\_  
I am \_\_\_\_\_

I am \_\_\_\_\_  
I am best at \_\_\_\_\_  
I am worst at \_\_\_\_\_  
I am interested in \_\_\_\_\_  
I shout \_\_\_\_\_  
I cry \_\_\_\_\_  
I am \_\_\_\_\_

I \_\_\_\_\_  
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I \_\_\_\_\_

## Teaching and Guiding Students with ADHD

Heather Schuiling

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a complex condition that contains many variables. Although it affects people differently, there are commonalities that are present in people with ADHD; this includes the inability to control one's own behavior due to hyperactivity and impulsivity, and/or problems with paying attention. Typically, ADHD develops in children before the age of seven and may remain a life-long disability; however, changes in symptoms may occur over time. The symptoms are apparent in various settings including the school, home, extracurricular activities, and work (OSEP, 2004; Strock, 2006).

My interest in this topic began during my fall student teaching assignment in the second grade where I had two students diagnosed with ADHD and on medication for the condition, and another child I suspected as having ADHD but was not formally diagnosed. This latter student often provided the biggest challenge to my teaching and the overall order of the classroom. I felt like my only responses were to constantly remind him to stay on task, keep his hands to himself, and to stop talking while I was teaching. However, his actions did not improve while I was there and in addition to my reminders, he was often reprimanded from other teachers for interrupting their classes, acting inappropriately on the playground, and provoking other students. At times it seemed that the only attention he was receiving was negative.

From my experience with these students, I wanted to understand ADHD better and learn about instructional strategies and classroom management techniques that would better serve these students and possibly others. From my research on this topic, I've learned that ADHD is estimated to occur in 3-5% of school age children (OSEP, 2004; Strock, 2006), making it likely that I will continue to have students with this condition in my future classrooms.

My initial thoughts for this project were to solely look into classroom management strategies used to help students with ADHD stay on task; however, I soon realized that good instructional practices precede effective classroom management, so I decided to combine the two topics into one paper. My sources for the paper included books, journals, websites, and reports on the topic of ADHD, as well as one video recording and two personal conversations with specialists in the field of teaching students with ADHD. The first personal contact was with a current special education teacher in an elementary school and the second was with a current middle-school math teacher who was diagnosed with ADHD as a child and today is successful teaching students with the condition. Subsequently, from my research I found that many of the teaching and guiding strategies geared towards students with ADHD would also be beneficial to my future class as a whole.

The official definition of ADHD comes in the form of a list of criteria developed by the American Psychiatric Association in their *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV-TR)*.

**DSM-IV Criteria for ADHD** (Association, 2000)

**I. Either A or B:**

<b>A. Six or more of the following symptoms of inattention have been present for at least 6 months to a point that is disruptive and inappropriate for developmental level:</b>
<b>Inattention</b>
1. Often does not give close attention to details or makes careless mistakes in schoolwork, work, or other activities.
2. Often has trouble keeping attention on tasks or play activities.
3. Often does not seem to listen when spoken to directly.
4. Often does not follow instructions and fails to finish schoolwork, chores, or duties in the workplace (not due to oppositional behavior or failure to understand instructions).
5. Often has trouble organizing activities.
6. Often avoids, dislikes, or doesn't want to do things that take a lot of mental effort for a long period of time (such as schoolwork or homework).
7. Often loses things needed for tasks and activities (e.g. toys, school assignments, pencils, books, or tools).
8. Is often easily distracted.
9. Is often forgetful in daily activities.
<b>B. Six or more of the following symptoms of hyperactivity-impulsivity have been present for at least 6 months to an extent that is disruptive and inappropriate for developmental level:</b>
<b>Hyperactivity</b>
1. Often fidgets with hands or feet or squirms in seat.
2. Often gets up from seat when remaining in seat is expected.
3. Often runs about or climbs when and where it is not appropriate (adolescents or adults may feel very restless).
4. Often has trouble playing or enjoying leisure activities quietly.
5. Is often "on the go" or often acts as if "driven by a motor".

6. Often talks excessively.
<b>Impulsivity</b>
1. Often blurts out answers before questions have been finished.
2. Often has trouble waiting one's turn.
3. Often interrupts or intrudes on others (e.g., butts into conversations or games).

After looking at these lists I noted that many children and even adults can act in the ways described; however, for a person to be diagnosed with ADHD these criteria must be met for more than six months, be present before the age of seven, and be so pervasive as to negatively affect the child's ability to succeed academically or socially. A person can have either a "combined type" of ADHD, where both inattention and hyperactivity-impulsivity are inappropriate; a "predominantly inattentive type" where behavior does not play a factor; or a "predominantly hyperactive-impulsive type" where only those criteria from the list are apparent. Also, as stated previously, the symptoms must be present in two or more settings and should not be confused with other mental disorders such as depression, anxiety disorder, or schizophrenia to name a few.

I learned a lot about what works for children with ADHD from a conversation I had with a current middle-school math teacher who was diagnosed with ADHD in his early youth. Eric Schwalbach easily stated his favorite teacher in school by saying,

Ms. Cobb was my favorite teacher of all time. She was my fifth grade teacher... she was very firm, but showed me that she cared about me. After a very difficult fourth grade year with Ms. Stone (in the principals office daily/ sometimes two or three times a day), Ms. Cobb gave me a clean slate. (Schwalbach, 2008)

Eric is making a good point; many teachers do not respect the confidentiality of their students with ADHD who subsequently get labeled as "trouble makers" by staff of the school making it very hard to break away from that stigmatization.

Additionally, Eric states that Ms. Cobb was a "warm demander"—she was firm but understanding and patient. He later stated that she did not dismiss his bad behavior because of his ADHD but found ways to guide his behavior while respecting him. Overall, she understood Eric and did not let him fall through the cracks of the educational system. Today, as a seventh and eighth grade remedial math teacher, Eric states that "85 to 90% of my students have some form of ADD whether labeled or not...(therefore,) I make the same accommodations for everyone so I cover the IEP for each individual without having to make special exceptions" (Schwalbach, 2008). For example, he provides extra time for students to finish assignments and accepts late work. He states that students with ADHD love to get let off the hook of finishing an assignment since completing a task can be very difficult, so he chooses to hold all students accountable for their work.

Finally, Eric makes an interesting argument about how he believes that Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) (a term that is no longer used to describe the disorder,) is actually a better descriptor. He states that students begin to act out in hyperactive/impulsive ways when they are

not being mentally or physically challenged. He states that many of his students over the years that were diagnosed with ADHD were highly intelligent, yet considered a behavior problem because they acted out when bored. Similar to Eric's remark, there is a growing concern over whether students are being misdiagnosed as having ADHD when really they are gifted in one or more areas of the curriculum. Authors of a report on this topic state that "(gifted) children often respond to non-challenging or slow-moving classroom situations by "off-task" behavior, disruptions, or other attempts at self-amusement. This use of extra time is often the cause of the referral for an ADHD evaluation" (Webb & Latimer, 1993).

Below is a list of behaviors associated with giftedness which has similar aspects to the lists above describing ADHD:

1. Poor attention, boredom, daydreaming in specific situations
2. Low tolerance for persistence on tasks that seem irrelevant
3. Judgment lags behind development of intellect
4. Intensity may lead to power struggles with authorities
5. High activity level; may need less sleep
6. Questions rules, customs and traditions (Webb & Latimer, 1993)

Teachers' observations are used by medical professionals (psychiatrists, pediatricians, etc.) in the process of determining whether a child has ADHD. For that reason, it is the responsibility of teachers to remain objective and consider the context and settings of the inappropriate behavior (remembering that students who have the predominantly inattentive form of ADHD often go under the radar because behavior management is not an issue.) Additionally, depression (caused by divorce of parents, death of a loved one, etc.), anxiety, food allergies, and many other conditions can cause behaviors similar to ADHD. Overall, teachers need to be aware of the possible confusion between ADHD and other conditions and request alternative testing in addition to ADHD when others are suspected.

The U.S. Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) developed a comprehensive guide to teaching children with ADHD that has been very useful in writing this paper (OSEP, 2004). The guide states that there are three primary components of a successful program for working with students with ADHD: academic instruction, behavioral intervention, and classroom accommodations. After reading this report, I see that incorporating these techniques into daily class routines would be highly beneficial to the whole class.

Starting with academic instruction, the goal is to keep students interested and therefore on task during the lesson. A good way to do this is by structuring the lesson so that students can see how it relates to their lives now and in the future, as well as making connections to other content areas in the curriculum. When introducing the lesson, teachers should set clear learning and behavioral expectations, give concise instructions, and post the agenda so that nothing is a mystery to the students. During the lesson, a teacher should support the child with ADHD by providing private cues to redirect the student and give advance warning before calling on the child to answer a question. These and other techniques avoid bringing negative attention to the student with ADHD that the whole class then witnesses (OSEP, 2004).

Additionally, it is often helpful for students with ADHD to have their assignments broken into smaller, more manageable units to help these students better stay on task and focused. Either verbally or in writing, the teacher should highlight key points that the students should grasp. Cooperative learning strategies such as small group and partner work have shown to be useful, as

well as assistive technology (computer programs) and other audiovisual materials (document cameras and projector screens, books on tape, etc.) that grab the attention of the student and break up the monotony of the teacher as the sole provider of information (Harlacher, Roberts, & Merrell, 2006). At the conclusion of a lesson (after giving advance warning of time left to finish work), effective teachers preview the next day's lesson to the class and try to give immediate feedback to the student with ADHD both on their academic and behavioral work during the lesson. For students that have marked problems completing assignments, teachers should focus on quality over quantity when giving feedback (OSEP, 2004; Johnson, 2008).

Moreover, acquiring good organizational and study skills habits can often be overwhelming tasks for students with ADHD. Aiding students in these areas will help alleviate potential classroom disruptions and help the student feel more in control of themselves and their surroundings. A few ways to do this are by setting up systems that help the student organize their class work and homework better, such as separate assignment notebooks that are color coded. It is also important to schedule set times for students to clean out and organize their personal areas such as desks, lockers, and backpacks. Time management can also cause problems for students with ADHD, so having posted schedules in the classroom and on their desks can serve as reminders. Additionally, study skills that break information into manageable parts help to reduce stress. These may include students with ADHD covering parts of worksheets or books to maintain focus, developing note-taking skills such as two column notes that organize information, and referring to a checklist of mistakes they commonly make (OSEP, 2004). (For more individualized instructional practices for students with ADHD in different content areas, refer to the complete guide by OSEP.)

Next, there are many behavioral interventions that are showing success when working with students with ADHD. Students who struggle with impulsivity and hyperactivity tend to have trouble forming friendships and often have a hard time thinking through the social consequences of their actions. Effective teachers are understanding of the difficulties students with ADHD face daily and provide positive reinforcements to guide their behavior. One way to do this is through the use of praise. It is suggested that specific praise be given often to define appropriate behavior that students with ADHD are exhibiting rather than using reactive punishment strategies to try to change behavior. OSEP's guide states, "(n)egative consequences may temporarily change behavior, but they rarely change attitudes and may actually increase the frequency and intensity of inappropriate behavior by rewarding misbehaving students with attention" (OSEP, 2004).

In addition to praise, teachers may choose to occasionally ignore the student's inappropriate behavior if the class environment is not being disrupted. The teacher can remove items that may be causing a distraction; however, some items may be used to calm a student with ADHD and help them to focus while providing sensory input. Such items are dependent on the child's needs, but may include the use of clay, hand-held stress balls, or therapy balls (inflatable ball child sits on) (OSEP, 2004; Harlacher et al., 2006). In addition to incorporating movement activities into one's lesson, successful teachers allow for occasional "escape valve" outlets for students with ADHD. This can simply be asking a student to run an errand then stating that the expectation is to come back ready to focus and work (OSEP, 2004).

Behavioral contracts and management plans are two methods that aid students in managing their own behavior. They are developed by both the teacher and student and identify goals for the student to reach. One method uses a rating system where the child rates herself at designated times and if the teachers rating is the same or close to the child's self-rating, then the

child receives points which can be exchanged for various privileges (OSEP, 2004; Harlacher et al., 2006). A token economy system has been shown to keep students with ADHD on task and can be used for the whole class so that the student with ADHD is not made highly visible. This involves the use of tokens being given for appropriate behavior (or taken away when necessary) that the students cash in for various awards. The rewards could be as simple as extra time on the computer, a “free” period at the end of the week, or a pizza party at the end of the quarter (Dawkins, 1994; Harlacher et al., 2006).

Finally, there are many classroom adjustments that can be made to better accommodate the needs of students with ADHD. Simply seating the student closer to the teacher or another peer role model serves as proximity reminders of what is expected and cuts down on distractions. Touching a student’s shoulder also serves as effective redirection (Johnson, 2008). Music is a good focusing strategy, but it should fit the activity—i.e. calming music for seatwork, or energetic music for transitions. Furniture such as desks, chairs, and tables should be assessed so that a proper fit is made. Many students get distracted when physically uncomfortable (OSEP, 2004).

Overall, teachers who are effective at teaching and guiding students with ADHD make conscious efforts to reach out to these children. First, if the child is diagnosed or suspected of having ADHD the teacher will evaluate the child’s individual needs and strengths. By this, the teacher will make close observations of the child’s preferred learning style and add this into his or her lesson plans, as well as any strengths the child has and then build upon them. She will also make note of the settings and conditions that trigger inappropriate behavior. The teacher will collaborate with the special education teacher and request a referral when necessary and follow any accommodations stated in the child’s IEP. And finally, the teacher will involve the parents to learn more about the child in different settings and what strategies work or do not work for them. As the elementary special education teacher that I interviewed explained, “students with ADHD cannot help their instinctual behavior, so it is important that teachers are very patient with these students, yet be consistent with consequences so that you are seen as fair and predictable” (Johnson, 2008). Indeed, by incorporating the best practices listed throughout this paper, the class culture as a whole will likely benefit.

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## Applicable Behavior Management Techniques

Bill Shea

### Introduction

#### Description of Topic

Classroom environments vary as much as the teachers who teach in them. Teachers have different styles: too relaxed, calm and controlled, and strict/authoritative. Some are too relaxed and have little control, some have a really authoritarian approach to control, and some seem to effortlessly control the classroom.

I wanted to explore what techniques can be used when a teacher from one style takes over for a classroom midway through the year. Most behavior management books talk about how important it is to set up your classroom before the students walk in the door. This preventative behavior management isn't possible for substitutes, student teachers, and teachers who take over a classroom after the initial teacher moves on. What specific, applicable, pull-it-out-of-the-drawer-and-use-it-immediately techniques exist in the literature?

#### Why This Topic?

When I took over for my mentor teacher during student teaching, I realized how difficult it was to introduce the students to a new form of behavior management. My expectations were much higher than my mentor teacher's and I highly emphasized personal accountability with my students.

Specifically, I wanted to be less behaviorist than my mentor teacher. He operated on a heavy rewards/consequences system that seemed black and white to me and that originated from the teacher. In my opinion, it removed all responsibility from the students and set the teacher in opposition to the students. An example would be "You talked in class so you owe me recess."

But wanting to set up a system more reminiscent of William Glasser's Reality Theory Model is easier said than done. The old system was easier for them because the teacher did all the work; their job was just to not get caught. I wanted them to be accountable, voice their reasons, create their own solutions, select their consequences, and reflect on their behavior.

To make this even harder, the school environment as a whole was strictly behaviorist. Students would come into my classroom for reading and math groups with candy. When I first started my solo teach, the kids resisted and demanded candy before they would comply with expectations. They would ask me "If I do this, what will you give me?" The administration had a similar policy, giving rewards for good behavior and taking privileges for bad behavior. Again, very black and white.

Why was I opposed to this behaviorist approach? According to Harlan and Rowland (2002), "Punishment works unpredictably... is inefficient for teaching a new behavior... decreases a teacher's reinforcing value... promotes avoidance behaviors... is often harmful to a student's self-image... often results in students disliking school and the teacher and becoming sullen, negative, withdrawn, and antagonistic" (p. 120).

In this ocean of behavioral punishment/reward, how can I set up a system that was more "Evergreen?" How can I be who I am as a teacher when the culture of the school is set up against my style? What would William Glasser do (WWGDD)? How can I convince the kids to make that initial investment into a more fair management style? How can I maintain this more fair

style when the students are coming and going from my classroom and are only exposed to it for 1 or 2 hours out of an 8 hour day?

In the first section, I describe techniques that worked for me and represent my un-expert opinion. Unfortunately, I discovered most of them by trial and error. I discovered them through reading and through conversations with other teachers. I looked for solutions after things had already gotten bad. What would have been extremely helpful would have been if I had a huge list of behavior management techniques, like a rolodex, that I could flip through and find immediate and applicable strategies in the moment, rather than after school when I had time to discuss with other teachers.

The following section, “What about the pros,” describes my research. For my project, I checked out a ton of books from the library on behavior management, classroom management, and substitute teaching. This proved selectively fruitful, as most of them had general theories on management (who knew we should love our students?! Epiphany that sort of clichéd advice is not!) but little applicable advice. Theory is wonderful, but how do you love your student when she is threatening to stab another student?

#### What Did I Do?

Well, the first thing I did was tell them that they would never get candy from me. EVER! Whether they were good or bad, or it was Halloween. Carrot sticks, maybe, but candy, never. Then I settled in for the resistance and prepared to show them that I was serious and would not give up.

CONSISTENCY was key. I used my mentor teacher’s point system in the classroom, which served as a visual reminder of their behavior. Essentially, they got points when they were behaving and he got points when they were misbehaving. This strategy was okay, but would have been better if the point system was consistent. He would give them points for good behavior when students were walking and talking. This sent the message that they would get the required point amount regardless of how they behaved.

What I changed was that I was very literal with my point allotment. If they interrupted me or their classmates, I got a point. If they didn’t earn the points by meeting behavior expectations (which we had agreed upon as a class) I didn’t give them points. This threw them off, because they needed to get 10 points every hour and they always got it no matter what with my mentor. I think it took them 3 or 4 days of not getting the full point value to realize that I was going to hold them to their behavior agreement. Consistency. My first week was full of protests like “That’s not fair! He never gives himself that many points!!” I would agree and then tell them that I expected more out of them because I knew they could handle it.

After a serious disequilibrating moment with Professor Gery Gerst, in which he figuratively kicked my butt, stomped my ego, and made me doubt my future as a teacher, I realized the IMPORTANCE OF ATTITUDE. Gery told me the classroom had a “negative economy.” This means that the kids were always getting in trouble but rarely getting positive reinforcement. I blamed Gery, refused to talk him, and then sucked it up, picked up my bruised and battered ego, admitted that he was entirely right (and not just mean and out to destroy me!), and vowed, for my own sanity and my students, to make a change.

SELF-REFLECTION and the ADMITTANCE OF FAULT are a valuable behavior technique. I changed my attitude and stopped perceiving them as resistant to my new style. Instead, I realized I needed to have a positive attitude (and to hide my stress from the soul-sucking that is teaching a DI Scripted Curriculum). When the kids realize that you have a

positive attitude, are having fun, and are on their side, they will follow you wherever you lead them.

I started allowing more deviation from the script, which made everyone happy. I allowed more jokes, personal stories, and related but non-scripted conversations to happen. I increased the amount of praise I gave them. I remained consistent with my expectations. I relaxed and started to have fun as a teacher. This tiny change in attitude led to huge changes in behavior.

At one point, I had to admit that I was struggling. I asked my mentor teacher to “sub” for me while I took a day off to reorganize myself. I VISITED OTHER CLASSROOMS in the school and watched the different techniques these different teachers used. I talked to them and shared my difficulties and listened to their feedback. This day off gave me time to reflect, re-energize, and refocus. I think it did the same for my students, because after that things were much better.

I increased the amount of fun activities I could do within the constraints of a scripted curriculum. I started getting students up to the blackboard as much as possible and started using games to learn whenever possible. Essentially, I MADE IT AS ANTI-DIRECT INSTRUCTION AS POSSIBLE.

One of the most valuable things I did was institute strategies from DISRUPTING THE DISRUPTER. I didn’t attend the workshop, but Justin Becker did, and he filled me in on the main point, which is essentially to establish physical contact as much as possible. Every morning, I made sure to MAKE A POSITIVE, PERSONAL CONNECTION with every single student. I would go to the cafeteria before school and chat with all of them, putting arms around them, giving them high fives, asking them about their lives. During transitions, I would high-five or hug every student. I CREATED UNIQUE HIGH FIVES for students that were too cool to high five, such as funny ones like an “E.T. Touch” (pointer finger to pointer finger). In class, I constantly high-fived or patted backs. Creating this contact really made a huge difference in how kids responded to me and eliminated a lot of behavior issues that students displayed for other teachers but not me. I would say this was my number one, most successful behavior management technique.

Another powerful technique was PARENTAL CONTACT. I started a routine of parental contact with every student. I used phone calls with each student’s parents at least once a week, mainly to TELL THEM GOOD THINGS. When I had a concern, I asked them for advice on how they helped their child behavior positively. By making them the expert I got them on my side and got them to help me out by reinforcing positive behavior at home.

#### What About the Experts?

For my learning, I collected as many applicable behavior management techniques as I could find in the time allotted. I do not endorse or vilify any of the techniques, I just list them. Teachers can choose to use, ignore, modify, or combine any or all of the techniques I listed below. Even the bad ones, of which there are some in my opinion, may have some tiny aspect that may potentially inspire you.

#### **Introduction to the Techniques**

I read and browsed through about thirty books for the techniques described in the Appendix.. The books contained a lot of theory, a lot on preventative steps, and had hardly any applicable techniques. The techniques I describe above were few and far between in the approximately 10,000 pages that I read/skimmed, and probably about 1% of the pages actually had a useable technique.

Other than the techniques that I did manage to find, I did learn one very important thing. Behavior management is incredibly difficult in a teaching model that does not engage the students. I could have had this very rolodex of techniques during my student teaching and it would have barely helped due to the fact that a direct instruction scripted curriculum is entirely un-motivating and un-engaging to students. I truly believe that this sort of generic and unnatural curriculum is inherently infected with behavior management problems.

Teaching is largely an affective enterprise. This means that the more personable a teacher is the better the classroom. Teachers who are caring and create a community in the classroom do not have to constantly police their classrooms. Making teaching relevant and meaningful motivates the students, which in turn eliminates most behavior problems teachers will face.

There is one last point I would like to get across: A distinction these books made was the difference between a regulated classroom and a well-behaved classroom. Behaviorism essentially creates police states, where teachers are the law and students are the criminals. You can have the most orderly classroom in the world, but if you are policing the students, you are giving them nothing. What educational benefit comes out of a situation where students don't have to reflect on their behavior? The goal should be to change your students negative behavior with positive behavior, not just eliminating the negative.

The techniques, found in the appendix of the full version of this paper, are organized into the following categories:

- Theoretical Models and Advice
- General Classroom Procedures
- Power Struggles, Aggression, and Defiance
- Attention Seeking Behavior
- Multiple-Use Strategies
- ADHD & Attention Issues
- One Minute Discipline

## References and Annotated Bibliography

Of thirty books on behavior and classroom management and substitute teaching, these books had applicable management techniques. I conducted several interviews for this project as well, but these yielded theoretical information rather than applicable techniques.

Bender, W. N. (2003). *Relational discipline: Strategies for in-your-face kids*. Boston: A & B.

This book had really good strategies for a wide range of defiant students. He has a good philosophy base; the only complaint I had was that his descriptions were quite long and difficult to summarize.

Bianco, A. (2002). *One-minute discipline: Classroom management strategies that work*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

This book is really just a random collection of strategies, quotes, and pictures. It had some cool ideas that I enjoyed. It also had some ideas that I didn't agree with at all. It's made for the teacher who hasn't had as much theoretical background as the MIT has provided. It still was useful at times.

Harlan, J. C., & Rowland, S. T. (2002). *Behavior management strategies for teachers: Achieving instructional effectiveness, student success, and student motivation-every teacher and any student can!* (2nd ed.). Springfield IL: Charles C Thomas.

I loved this book. The writing style is clear and concise even though it is a textbook. It has a strong philosophical background and clearly presents several complementary ideas. It has good applicable techniques as well. The last section is all about how corporal punishment is bad, which I think is obvious and unnecessary.

Kosier, K. (1998). *The discipline checklist: Advice from 60 successful elementary teachers*: National Education Association.

This is a little pamphlet identical to the Paraeducator book we all bought this quarter. It is clear and concise, organized very well. Overall, a great resource.

Rathvon, N. (1999). *Effective school interventions: Strategies for enhancing academic achievement and social competence*. New York London: The Guilford Press.

This is another helpful textbook. It had good ideas, but was not as clear or enjoyable to read as Harlan & Rowland's book.

Zirpoli, T. J. (2005). *Behavior management: Applications for teachers* (4th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Merrill Prentice Hall.

Another textbook. This book had some good ideas, but overall was less accessible than the other two textbooks I have listed here.

## Appendix

### Theoretical Models And Advice

#### Glasser's Reality Therapy Model

- 1) "Think about yourself and the student. Ask "What am I routinely doing with this student?" (Caring)
- 2) Then ask, "Are these things working?" If the answer is "No," make a commitment to stop what you have been doing. (Compassionate)
- 3) Make a plan to do something every day with this student is personal, friendly, and conveys the message, "I care about you." Be persistent even though a long time passes before your student responds favorably. Stay calm and courteous no matter how your student behaves. (Consistency)
- 4) When a disruption occurs, issue a simple corrective or directive, such as, "Please stop it" or, "Please be here on time," – nothing more. Continue with STEP 3. (Communication)
- 5) If STEP 4 does not work, ask the student to evaluate his or her behavior: "What are you doing?" and, "Is what you are doing against the rules?" If her or she denies doing anything, tell him or her what you see him or doing and state the rule he or she is breaking. Put the responsibility where it belongs: on the student. Don't say anything more: just wait. If you have been using STEPS 1, 2, and 3, the questions in STEP 5 are very effective in stopping the misbehavior. (Choice)
- 6) If the student does not stop misbehaving, then tell him or her firmly and courteously, "We've got to get together and work it out." Take time to encourage the student to come up with the plan and help if necessary. The plan should be short-term, specific, possible, and involve some form of positive action more than, "I'll stop." Get a commitment from the student to follow the plan: shake hands on it, verbalize it, or put it in writing and sign it. It is important in this step to impress upon the student that the problem is going to be worked out. If the plan is not working and the student disrupts again, accept no excuses. Ask the student, "When are you going to do what you agreed to do in your plan?" Find out what went wrong. If necessary, renegotiate the plan and get a commitment from the student to follow it. (Contingency, communication, conferencing, consistency, and choice)
- 7) If disruption continues, repeat STEP 6 once or twice. If this does not solve the problem, isolate the student at a time-out location in the room, or, if necessary, in the office. (Be careful, the office can be a very interesting place to be sent for some students!). Say to the student "I want you to sit here until you have a plan that will help you follow the rules or when you are ready to work out a plan with me."
- 8) Step 8 is in-school suspension.
- 9) If a student continues to misbehave, he or she is declared out of control, and parents must be notified and asked to take the student home. However, the principal tells the parents and the student, "Tomorrow is a new day. We would like your child to be with us tomorrow so long as reasonable behavior is maintained. If his or her behavior does not remain reasonable we will call you to take him or her home again." When the student returns to school the following day, if he or she misbehaves, go back to STEP 8 – in-

school suspension – until the student makes a plan to follow the rules (Conferencing, communication, and choice).

- 10) If consistent use of Steps 1 through 9 does not work, then the student must stay home permanently or receive special help provided either by the school district or community agencies. (Collaboration and conferencing)”

(Harlan & Rowland, 2002, p.35-37)

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### Dreikurs’ Choices and Logical Consequences

“...emphasizes that the responsibility for one’s chosen behaviors is learned by accepting and sometimes suffering the natural, related, or logical consequences of those behavioral choices. For example, the student who refuses to properly sit in his seat loses the use of his seat for while.”

(Harlan & Rowland, 2002, p.55)

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“W hen teachers and parents use written, formal descriptions of expected behaviors and specify what the consequences will be for performing those behaviors, they are using contingency contracting. Clearly communicating behavioral expectations and delivering the appropriate consequences are techniques that have been informally used for many years by successful teachers and parents in their disciplinary efforts. More formalized job descriptions and outcome statements, similarly, have been used for years by successful business managers and leaders.

Behavioral techniques and classroom management strategies are not complex; rather, they require a reversal of traditional reactive thinking where the focus is on punishing students’ inappropriate behaviors to a commitment to pro-actively acknowledge and otherwise reinforce students’ appropriate behaviors. The management of students’ behaviors, like instruction, should be a dynamic and changing process. The true hallmark of professionals is their ability to accept change, grow, and improve rather than stagnate.” p. 183

(Harlan & Rowland, 2002, p. 183)

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### The Fair Pair Rule

“When one behavior is targeted for reduction, an appropriate behavior should be targeted for positive reinforcement. Preferably, the behavior targeted for increase is an appropriate substitute for, or at least incompatible with, the challenging behavior targeted for decrease.”

### Principles of Reinforcement

1. Appropriate behaviors should be immediately reinforced
2. Appropriate behaviors should be frequently reinforced with frequency defined by the specifics of the situation
3. There is no one universal reinforcer that appeals equally to all students
4. provide students with the opportunity to choose fro a wide variety of reinforcers
5. Reinforcement should be delivered consistently and frequently with complex tasks and with new tasks

(Harlan & Rowland, 2002, p.77-81)

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“Delegate, work smart, and save energy. It’s a marathon! NEVER do ANYTHING you can delegate to a student. The school year isn’t a 50-yard dash, it’s a marathon. Tasks from correcting papers to housekeeping chores should be assigned to students and aides. The secret here is for you to keep your 25 helpers as productive as possible. Good delegation requires that you spend time in training students or aides in the proper procedures for accomplishing each task. Delegation saves valuable energy on a daily basis throughout the school year and over the course of your career.” p.3-4

(Bianco, 2002, p.3-4)

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### Be Prepared!

“If you want order, then be overplanned and organized. Keep kids busy and involved. Have things planned for students who finish early. I find it’s easiest to have things for them to work on memorizing (states, capitals, location of states, and so on). Another thing they enjoy doing when they finish their work is getting a set of numbered index cards on which I have written questions about what we have learned this year. An answer sheet is provided, and they can quiz themselves or turn it into a game with other students.”

(Burden, 1999, p.6)

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## General Classroom Procedures

### The Kounin Model (1970)

Variables for effectively managing groups:

1. “With-itness: the ability to accurately spot deviant behavior, almost before it starts;
2. Overlappingness: the ability to spot and deal with deviant behavior while going right on with the lesson;
3. Smoothness: the absence of behaviors that interrupt the flow of activities;
4. Momentum: the absence of behaviors that slow down lesson pacing;
5. Group alerting: the techniques used by teachers to keep non-involved students attending and forewarned of forthcoming events;
6. Accountability: the techniques used by teachers to keep students involved and enthusiastic; and
7. Challenge arousal: the techniques used by teachers to keep students involved and enthusiastic
8. Variety: the degree to which various aspects of lessons differed.”

(Harlan & Rowland, 2002, p.23)

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### Active Teaching of Classroom Rules

1. Actively teach the rules with explicit teaching of the rules, display rules on a poster, give students a copy of the rules
2. Tell students to check if they are following rules you will employ random observations
3. share examples of rule following and ask students to give examples
4. during lesson provide behavior specific praise and feedback
5. after the first day, briefly reteach a rule or two at the beginning of each class

(Rathvon, 1999)

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### Say/Show/Check

- 1) Say: use words to verbally encode motor or procedural rule “we raise our hands”
- 2) Show: Show rule by having student demonstrate it
- 3) Check: ask students to watch for you to make a mistake while demonstrating the rule
  - a) demonstrate or have student demonstrate correct way

\*field testing shows doing this with upper elementary/middle schoolers may temporarily result in an increase of bad behavior due to the modeling of bad behavior

(Rathvon, 1999)

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### Transition time

“...keeping transitions as rapid as possible is especially important for disabled and disadvantaged students, who are already at risk for lower engagement rates” (p.78)

“...for maximum benefit, the transition time lesson should be taught during the first week of school and re-taught after school breaks or whenever transitions become lengthy or disruptive” (p.80))

Ways to improve transition:

1. explicitly model
2. beat the buzzer
3. peer-monitored transitions

(Rathvon, 1999)

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### Teaching Transition Time

- 1) talk about transition time: what does it mean? Why is it important to do fast?
- 2) Discuss ways to make transition time faster
- 3) Model transition time procedures to your students
- 4) Ask them to practice a transition time while you watch and give feedback

(Rathvon, 1999)

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### Speeding up Transitions: Beat the Buzzer

- 1) At transition time, tell students you are going to time them
- 2) Time how long transition takes with stopwatch
- 3) Gradually reduce time allowed until criterion is reached

(Rathvon, 1999)

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### Checking Stations

“Checking stations decrease ‘down time’ and increase productivity because students do not need to wait to receive feedback on written work.” (p.86)

- 1) “Tell the students that they are going to be learning a new way of correcting their own papers
- 2) Review the rules and model the checking procedure as follows:
  - a) If someone is already at a checking station, use another station or stay at your desk until it is clear
  - b) Leave pencils and pens at your desk and take your paper to the checking station
  - c) Check each answer with the answer key
  - d) Circle wrong answers with the red pen or marker
  - e) Go back to your seat, cross out the wrong answers, and write in the correct answers
  - f) Check your paper again with the answer key
  - g) Put the corrected paper in the box
- 3) Tell students that you expect them to be honest and that each day you will look at some of the papers to make sure they have been checked correctly. Tell them that if those students have found all their mistakes, they will earn a reward.
- 4) Praise students for correct checking behavior at the stations
- 5) Spot check some of the papers each day to review accuracy. Provide praise and a small reward if students have found all of their mistakes.
- 6) Phase out the rewards as students become accustomed to using the checking stations”

(Rathvon, 1999, p.87)

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#### The Coupon System: Decreasing Inappropriate Requests for Teacher Assistance

- 1) Give each group a number of coupons (4 or 5 per work period)
- 2) Every time a student asks you a question that isn’t necessary (i.e. they already understand the expectations) take a coupon
- 3) Remaining tickets will be used to determine a group reward at the end of the work period or week

(Rathvon, 1999)

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#### The Study Game: Improving Productivity During Seatwork

- 1) “Tell the students you want them to learn to work harder on their seatwork while you are working with small groups and so you will be looking for “Best Studiers” during that time

- 2) Tell them that after the seatwork period, you will select the seven best studiers to go to the front of the classroom. Explain that you will be looking up from the small group several times and noticing the students who are the best studiers.
- 3) Praise appropriate studying behaviors at regular intervals during the seatwork period. Make one positive comment about every 3 to 5 minutes, such as, “Tonya is being a good studier.” If desired, use a sheet of paper to record the names of the best studiers.
- 4) At the conclusion of the seatwork period, call the seven best studiers to the front of the room and praise them”
- 5) Proceed with a game of “Heads up, Seven Up” with best studiers leading the game

(Rathvon, 1999, p.92)

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### Improving Achievement and Behavior with Contingent Praise

contingency – should specify characteristics of praised behavior in a credible way

- 1) “Select an instructional period when students are especially off-task and unproductive
- 2) Divide the class into teams by rows or tables or some other method
- 3) Explain to the students that they will be working in teams to earn gold stars for accurate work. At the beginning of the selected period, distribute Good Work cards to each team. If students are seated at tables or in desk clusters, place a Good Work card on the table or on a desk in the cluster. If students are seated in rows, tape a Good Work card on the wall or chalkboard near the row.
- 4) During the instructional period, pick up a student paper from each team three times (three different students). If a problem is correctly completed, deliver a specific praise statement, using the team’s name and put a star on the team’s Good Work card.
- 5) If no problems are correct at that time, return the paper to the student with no comment.
- 6) At the end of the period, have each team report the number of stars received by all team members and praise the teams for working hard.
- 7) Place a large gold star or sticker on the class chart to indicate the team(s) with the largest number of stars on their Good Work cards.”

(Rathvon, 1999, p.96)

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### Short, Soft, and Close: Delivering Effective Reprimands

- 1) “If this intervention is primarily directed at a small group of students, move them near the front of the classroom or to an area of the classroom that you can reach rapidly.
- 2) When a student exhibits an undesired behavior, move to within touching distance, obtain eye contact, and deliver a short, soft, and close reprimand as follows:
  - a) Short: no more than two words in addition to the student’s name (e.g., “Sam, stop talking!”).

- b) Soft: audible only to the student being reprimanded;
  - c) Close: near enough to the student to touch him or her and obtain eye contact
- 3) Try to catch the reprimanded student being good within the next few minutes so you can reinforce positive academic or social behavior”

(Rathvon, 1999, p.100)

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### Sit and Watch: Teaching Prosocial Behaviors

- 1) “Place a chair away from the center of classroom activity but in a place where students can continue to observe the ongoing lesson
- 2) Tell the students that they will be learning a new way to get the most out of their lessons by using a Sit and Watch chair
- 3) Point out the Sit and Watch chair and explain you will be telling students who break classroom rules to sit in the chair for a short time and watch the other students behaving appropriately
- 4) When inappropriate behavior occurs, first describe it to the misbehaving student (“Don’t hit other children at your table”)
- 5) Then describe what would have been appropriate behavior in the situation (“Keep your hands to yourself when you are doing your work”)
- 6) Then describe what would have been appropriate behavior in the situation (“Sit here and watch how the other children work without hitting”)
- 7) When the student has been watching quietly for a brief period, ask if he or she is ready to rejoin the activity and display the appropriate behavior (“Do you know how to work without hitting now?”)
- 8) If the student indicates by nodding or verbalizing readiness to return, allow him or her to do so. If the child does not respond or responds negatively, tell him or her to sit and watch until ready to perform the appropriate behavior
- 9) When the student returns to the group, give positive attention for appropriate behavior as soon as possible”

(Rathvon, 1999, p.109-110)

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### The Good Behavior Game

Set a time limit and a number of demerits that a team can get, and then offer a reward for all teams that stay within their demerit list. As time goes on, make the time frame longer and the prize-awarding less frequent

(Rathvon, 1999)

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### Red Light/Green Light

same as good behavior game, you just give each team a red, yellow, or green light based on how well they are behaving at a given point

(Rathvon, 1999)

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### Countdown to free time

Use a flipchart to show how much free time students can get.  
Each time there is misbehavior, reduce the free time

(Rathvon, 1999)

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### Using peer monitors to improve on-task behavior

Putting a peer in charge of watching and giving points to a another peer  
points can be traded in for prizes later

(Rathvon, 1999)

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### Self-managed behavior ratings

Have students give themselves points at the end of an activity period

(Rathvon, 1999)

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### Time-Out Ribbon

- 1) Give all students a ribbon to wear
- 2) Remove ribbon and attention when misbehavior occurs
- 3) Return ribbon after misbehavior has stopped for a certain time limit (3 minutes)

(Zirpoli, 2005)

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### Positive Practice

- 1) Teacher corrects inappropriate behavior (“Don’t throw paper”)
- 2) Inform student of appropriate alternative (“Walk it to garbage and drop it in”)
- 3) Allow the student to practice the appropriate behavior
- 4) Praise student for correct performance of behavior

#### Positive Practice Overcorrection

same as above, except the appropriate alternative is repeated over and over again (i.e., walking the paper ball to the garbage and dropping it twenty times, rather than just once)

(Zirpoli, 2005)

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#### Work Stations

“Have a variety of work stations for some students to complete written work. Allowing them to move around from station to station burns off physical energy, and doing a variety of work tasks keeps them from getting bored.”

(Kosier, 1998, p.21)

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#### Chart of Cooperation

“List a few examples of how some students have helped others or contributed something to the class. Add other examples weekly as you or students notice them occurring.”

(Kosier, 1998, p.32)

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#### Good Manners

“Prepare a “Good Manners” bulletin board with a number of examples. Begin a discussion of additional items.”

(Kosier, 1998, p.32)

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#### Stop the Clock: Improving Productivity During Small-Group Instruction

- 1) Tell the students you are timing their on-task behavior

- 2) When they have completed a time period of consecutive on-task behavior (ex. 15 minutes) the rest of the time period is free time for them
- 3) Restart the clock whenever someone goes off-task

(Rathvon, 1999)

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## **Power Struggles, Aggression, And Defiance**

### Defusing The Time Bomb: Avoiding Power Plays

Repeat the instructions –

- \*2 or 3 times each time the student challenges you, getting more quiet each time, saying students name each time
- \*after repetition, walk away and help someone else

Use Humor –

- \*“Well, that’s one way to go”
- \*NEVER at the students’ expense

Inquire About a Student’s Anger –

- \*Give the student a chance to voice frustration

Share Power –

- \*negotiate when the task will be complete if they want to do something else first
- \*small acknowledgement of students’ power can diffuse power struggles

Postpone the discussion – show that you care, even if you can’t talk right then

“Perception is the key to behavior. The identity of an adolescent is heavily tied to what they believe others perceive about them” (p.46)

(Bender, 2003)

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### Let’s Make a Deal

“A new teacher or perhaps a newly transferred teacher will need to establish or reestablish himself or herself as having a legitimate role in the class” (p.138)

- 1) Identify the power kid – this kid influences everyone else, so you need to negotiate power with him and use him as a conduit to negotiate with the rest of the class
- 2) Seek a self-description – students come up and tell their class role and positive descriptors of themselves, write it on the board
- 3) Discuss the descriptions – add to the list for each student through class discussion

- 4) Repeat the process with one or two more youngsters – locate their name on the board near or far from each other
- 5) Select the Power kid – the previous compliments for other students will encourage him/her to participate. have them put their name in the middle of the board, discuss their position of power in class, and responsibilities of leadership
- 6) Negotiate Power – ask the class what power (homework veto, etc) this student should have in class
- 7) Finish with the other participating students – 6 to 8 students total
- 8) Develop an “influence portrait” – Draw lines/arrows between friends
- 9) Place yourself – ask if anyone is missing to see if they include you, ask them what roles you should have
- 10) Write up the deal! – make everyone sign it, post it and hand out copies to everyone

(Bender, 2003)

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### The Vindictive, Rude, and Defiant Student

“Through actions or statements, the vindictive, defiant student is begging for help.” (p.25)

You must get “the class back to work and quiet the student or separat[e] the student from the classroom.” p. 25

- 1) Give an assignment to the rest of the class  
“...defiant statements or vindictive actions frighten everyone, and the class will be worried about what will happen next.” p.25
- 2) Don't express personal anger
- 3) Gather information once the student is calmed down/isolated
- 4) Discuss solutions with the disrupter

(Lemlech, 1999)

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### ...to De-Escalate Defiant Behavior

- 1) Expand on active listening and identify the feelings the student may be experiencing (“It sounds like you're frustrated with how easy the work is...”)
- 2) Send an I-message to let the student know the behavior is creating discomfort (“I expect all students to make only positive comments to their classmates.”)
- 3) Offer assistance (“Would you like me to explain it again?”)
- 4) Provide options
- 5) State the expectation in a positive manner
- 6) Review available options and consequences and give the student space and time to make a choice

- 7) Sometimes it is best to just walk away and give the student space
- 8) Ultimately, effective teachers clarify to students that they must make a choice about their behavior

(Harlan & Rowland, 2002)

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### The Classroom Bully

Give him/her:

1. a system for composing himself
2. help to understand feeling
3. solutions to anger/violence

(Source: Lemlech, 1999)

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### Intervention Targets and Components

- 1) “Identify goal (increasing compliance with teacher directions)
- 2) Identify behaviors to alter (reducing verbal and physical aggression)
- 3) Identify new behaviors (increasing cooperation with peers and adults)”

(Source: Rathvon, 1999, p.55)

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### Attention Seeking Behavior

#### Peer Confrontation Technique: Removing the Audience

use this technique for these three reasons:

- 1) removing the audience for inappropriate behavior
- 2) peer pressure to elicit desired behavior
- 3) help students understand their behavior

1) get the peers to work for you

times this won't work: when kid is easily embarrassed, when social pressure is from gang

Step 1:

after collecting baseline data, after an incident occurs

say “Wait a minute, everyone. We just saw an inappropriate behavior that disrupted our work.

What problem behavior did we all just see.” (p.50)

focus on behavior and the fact that it was a disruption

at this point, focus is on you and not on disrupter  
(focus on misbehavior, not person!!!)

Step 2:

once behavior is named (without student being named!), you ask  
“Why would somebody do that?”

have class critically analyze situation by naming off several ideas

Step 3:

have the class brainstorm solutions

“What should he do if he wants help?”

“What should he do if he is feeling angry?”

at no point are you looking at the student

Step 4:

turn to disrupter and encourage him to try one of the new behaviors

or if disrupter can handle it, you could say to him in class

“Would you like to try doing that with the help of the class? We’d all like to help you stop  
cussing so we can continue our work” p. 52

If disrupter is too upset, wait until after class to discuss situation

emphasize the need of the class to not be disrupted

“The class has not only benefited from witnessing a problem-solving approach to a disruption  
but they have also witnessed a mature, non-aggressive approach to that disruption. From your  
classroom model on this approach, many students will learn this approach to problem solving”  
(p.53)

“If students who are aggressive, defiant, and oppositional can find ways to demonstrate their  
personal authority and power in productive ways, they will not need to demonstrate their power  
in disruptive ways” (p.56)

(Bender, 2003)

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### The Incessant Interrupter

1. “Try a nonverbal gesture. Shake your head at the offender; catch the subject’s eye and gesture with your hand to “hold off” a moment; gain eye contact and then hold one finger to your lips
2. Use a direct statement such as “Richard is speaking now” or (for young elementary students) “It’s Mary’s turn.” These statements should be made in a noncommittal, unemotional tone of voice
3. Focus on the interruption. Sometimes the incessant interrupter can be helped by peers if you stop and ask the whole class, “How can we help Mabel so that she can remember to

wait her turn to speak?” (This works in elementary grades but no secondary.) In middle schools you might ask the group “How does it feel to be interrupted all the time?”

4. If the students are working in small groups and the interrupted is monopolizing the conversation, give the interrupted a job. Appoint him or her to be the group recorder or secretary to take notes on the discussion and the report to the class during the evaluation.”

(Lemlech, 1999, p.24-25)

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### When a Student Misbehaves for Attention...

- 1) “ignore the inappropriate behavior or refuse to react to the inappropriate behavior
- 2) look at the student without saying anything (don’t glare!)
- 3) move close to or stand by the student
- 4) cue or signal the student (written note asking them to stop behavior)
- 5) give an “I-message” that contains an objective description of the disruptive behavior, that conveys the teacher’s feelings, tells the effect of the misbehavior on the teacher or class, and requests cessation
- 6) legitimize the behavior and take the fun out of it (make a lesson out of behavior or using behavior as a guideline)
- 7) Satiation Strategy/Flooding (ex., student throwing paper wads in class has to throw paper wads for an entire period after class)
- 8) Perform an unexpected behavior which conveys that the attention-seeking behaviors will not be rewarded
- 9) distract misbehaving student and focus their attention elsewhere
- 10) Reward appropriate behavior”

(Harlan & Rowland, 2002, p.28-30)

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## Multiple-Use Strategies

### The Responsibility Strategy

Step 1: Deal with the Immediate Behavior First

Step 2: Consider the Behavior Problems Presented by the Student

Step 3: Reflect on Invitations Offered to the Student

“How has this student been invited to positively contribute to this school/class today?”

Step 4: Identifying several Potential Responsibilities

Step 5: The Teacher and Student Jointly Choose a Task

Step 6: Discuss the Responsibility with the Student and Principal

Step 7: Develop a Monitoring Plan for the Task

Examples of Responsibilities:

- \*Work as a peer buddy
- \*Be a “helper” to another student
- \*Serve as playground monitor
- \*have at-risk, behavior issue kids tutor younger kids
- \*Empty the trash cans
- \*Be a “Clean Room” monitor

“By virtue of tutoring, these kids were seen as “leaders” in some sense. Specifically, the behavior-problem adolescents began to “own” their tutees, “protecting” them on the playground and playing and interacting with them.” (p.59)

good for constant misbehavior students and effective for gang members

ask disrupter how you as teacher can utilize their leadership skills

“recognizes the power of the student in a way in which the teacher finds acceptable” (p.59)

(Bender, 2003)

### Show Me: The Video Monitoring Strategy

“...some students who misbehave to entertain the class may not realize that their misbehavior is, quite often, cause for disdain or even overt ridicule from their classmates... the majority of their classmates may react quite negatively to the class clown, since the frequent classroom antics disturb the ongoing learning process.” (p.103-104)

1. Define the specific behavior(s) that you consider to be problematic or disruptive behavior(s)
2. Obtain permission to videotape
3. Begin a frequency count of each occurrence of the problem behavior
4. After a few days, hold a conference with the student and show several examples of the problem behavior to the student. Also share the data with the student.
5. Intervention begins the next day. Hold daily conferences with the student and review the video of problem behaviors from that day. Point out the negative reactions from classmates, if any.
6. Wean the student from the daily conferences

video misbehavior, show it to student, show that other classmates are not happy (bored or disgusted) with the behavior

(Source: Bender, 2003)

### Reinforcement Menu

tangible or activity rewards – avoid reward “satiation” by giving students a list of choices to choose from

Directions: Below is a list of possible rewards our class could earn. Please circle the number that matches your level of interest in each reward. Your ratings will be used to help select the rewards.

Possible Rewards	Level of Interest		
	Low	Middle	High
Extra Recess	1	2	3
Good note home	1	2	3
Classroom Games	1	2	3
Special art project	1	2	3
Watching a video	1	2	3
Etc.			

(Rathvon, 1999, p. 42)

### Problem-Solving Student Conferences

“Step 1: Identify the problem  
 Step 2: Select a solution  
 Step 3: Obtain a commitment to try one of the solutions”

(Rathvon, 1999, p.105-106)

### Adhd & Attention Issues

#### Self-Monitoring of Attention

“Given that everyone is off task some percentage of the time, effective learners learn to mentally “check in” on the class discussion.” (p.115)

Materials Needed:

a self-monitoring audiotape, a self-monitoring checksheet, and a worksheet of academic problems

Self-monitoring tape: 20 minutes of single notes spaced 10 to 90 seconds apart

checksheet: grid that students fill out each time a beep goes off (was I paying attn: yes or no?)

“Being more attentive will help the student get homework and class work done more quickly and therefore give him or her more free time in class.” (p.118)

You also have to train the student on what is/is not paying attention

- model in front of the class, have them grade you
- this first training should take 15 to 20 minutes
- within 2 to 3 days, student will need no reminders to start doing this
- after a while, you can wean students off of the audiotape
- after a while longer, you can wean them off of the worksheet

“in many cases, this procedure doubles the total time on task for students with attention problems. Further, students showed increased attention abilities for up to 2 ½ months after the procedure was over.” (p.124)

#### Adaptations of Self-Monitoring for Other Problem Behaviors

- all you need is a checksheet
- have students chart things like:
  - use of obscene language
  - class preparedness
  - blurting out answers

(Bender, 2003)

#### ONE MINUTE DISCIPLINE:

#### Classroom Management Strategies That Work

(Brief descriptions of several of the techniques listed in this guidebook)

##### ·Citizenship Program Report

Create a report card that keeps track of citizenship skills (e.g., effort, respect, participation in activities like band or yearbook). At the end of each term, award points to students based on their citizenship report card (you can decide an appropriate reward system). Have parents, teacher, and student sign the citizenship report card every quarter.

##### ·Life Skill of the Week

Every week, highlight a new life skill throughout the day. Life skills are things like respect, integrity, initiative, flexibility, perseverance, organization, sense of humor, effort, common sense, problem-solving, responsibility, patience, friendship, curiosity, cooperation, caring, and courage. Keep an ongoing poster in the classroom and add new skills to it throughout the year.

##### ·The Mutual Consequence Plan

Say: “You did the crime and now you have to pay the time. Tell you what I’m going to do. I want you to go home and return tomorrow with three possible written consequences. I will pick one of yours, or help you fine-tune one of yours with you, or give you one of my own.”

The student now has to go home and seat out the situation alone or with his or her parents. The burden is now on the perpetrator. This “Let ‘em sweat” technique goes a long way in assuring that the infraction will not be repeated.

· “Pick a Card, Any Card”

Have a class meeting where the class decides a good list of rewards for appropriate behavior and consequences for misbehavior. When transgressions occur, the student picks from the appropriate deck of cards and must serve the activity written on it.

Reward examples: free book, homework pass, lunch with teacher, free time

Consequence example: paper on misbehavior, clean up room, lose recess

· Message on the Desk

Have a series of positive and negative cards at the ready. Without talking, place the card on students’ desks without comment. These signal a short meeting after the class period is over. Ask the student why they got a good card, or a bad card.

· Say the Secret Word or Phrase and All is Quiet

- 1) Each day ask a different student to give the class the secret word or phrase for that day.
- 2) Put the word or phrase on the board
- 3) When you say the secret word/phrase, every student is to FACE YOU AND FREEZE
- 4) Use the secret word ONLY when you need students’ absolute attention (Note: If the word/phrase is overused, it will lose its effectiveness)
- 5) Then share the important information with the students.
- 6) Repeat the word/phrase to RELEASE the students to return to their work or activity

· Early Finisher Chart

Create a list of activities that students can do when they finish their work before classmates. Activities could be things like helping a friend, doing homework, using the computer, playing games, study, silent reading, journal writing, etc.

· Sticky Notes

Create a culture of appreciation by visibly promoting and reinforcing positive work habits and behavior. Do this by writing a quick message on a sticky note and placing it on the students’ desks when appropriate.

· Token (Point) Economies

Give out “points” in the form of tickets, stars, or “dollars.” These can be exchanged for rewards later. On the back of a “dollar,” you could have a list of prosocial behaviors (honesty, caring, politeness, citizenship, helpfulness, consideration of others, respect, integrity, freedom of thought/activity, etc.). Circle the positive behavior that earned them the “dollar.”

· Bingo Game

The student brings a Bingo game to you at the end of a period or morning/afternoon session. The student can recommend a particular square that he or she has accomplished or completed during that session. If you agree, an X is placed on that square. The student can also bring the Bingo chart to you at regular intervals for positive reinforcement. When the student completes a Bingo, he or she receives the computer time or another reward. The Bingo squares can be adjusted or changed based on the individual student or a specific class.

An Incomplete example Bingo Card:

B	I	N	G	O
I don't interrupt my classmates	I use an inside voice	I am responsible for my own behavior	I am polite and considerate of others	I cooperate with my teacher
I participate in class discussions	I come to class and am prepared.	I assist a friend with his or her work when asked	I share with my classmates	I clean-up after myself and others

·The Tattle Box

Have students write down issues that they are having and place them in the tattle box. Check the tattle box on a regular schedule (daily, weekly) and discuss the matter either individually or in a class meeting.

(Bianco, 2002)

## **Alternative Education: Theory, Design**

Zack Siegel

### **Context and Rationale**

Through the course of student-teaching, I became aware of a unique niche within public education: alternative education. I engaged in a few brief observations of alternative schools where I witnessed powerful, meaningful curriculum and supportive, caring learning communities. Despite this strong emotional response to alternative education, my knowledge of alternative school systems and relevant pedagogy is lacking. I wish to gain a coherent understanding of alternative educational theory and practice because it will assist my career in public education.

In order to further my understanding of alternative education so I can apply its principles to my teaching in either alternative or general education, I will complete the following objectives in fulfillment of this independent project:

- Complete a literature review focusing on alternative education
- Observe an alternative high school English classroom
- Reflect upon this observation
- Research pedagogy used in alternative education
- List recommended strategies for implementation in all schools
- Apply pedagogic principles through a curricular unit included in appendix

### Literature Review On Alternative Education

#### Introduction

According to Hill (1997), educational policy has been traditionally transmitted through a centralized authority that is attached from the school it serves in principle. The product of a detached policymaker, Hill argues, will be unable to adequately address the interdependency of all issues facing the school. Rather, school-initiated change must produce localized alternatives to standard, systemic education. This paper will provide an overview of arguments in favor of alternative education, concentrating on the development of a theoretical framework for school reform, the benefits of such changes, and the presence of alternative education in Washington State.

#### Arguments On Alternative Education

The implementation of NCLB facilitates an important paradigm shift in education: Whereas prior language concerning at-risk students placed fault solely upon the dropout, NCLB holds schools accountable for student learning through student performance on standardized tests and graduation rates (Manning, 2006, p. 3). Rather than provide students with ineffective, generic pedagogy, schools are required to provide effective instruction for each student. In order for this to be accomplished, Manning (2006) states that it is necessary for schools to attain a greater

degree of local control in implementing alternative educational plans: Although high academic standards can be set for all students, many students will not be served by curricula that serves the majority (p. 10). Manning (2006) proposes three themes to guide such plans: high academic expectations, social/community connections, and development of self-management.

Kerka (2003) observes that it is easier for educators to modify a school environment than it is to alter learning styles of each individual child that does not conform to the norm, identifying eight criteria to consider when developing alternative education programs for at risk students:

- Caring, knowledgeable adults
- Sense of community
- Assets-approach towards youth
- Genuine respect for student capability
- High expectations for academic achievement and responsible behavior
- Multidimensional curricula
- Connect school to relevant community issues
- Long-term support

These specific focus points share commonalities with Manning's thematic framework. First, academic learning is not compromised in the creation of alternative learning. Second, both indicate that the development of social skills occurs through inclusion in the community, not ostracizing the at-risk. Last, the development of self-management skills is a lengthy process that requires extensive student support from the teacher.

What incentive exists to compel schools and communities to alter the existing educational environment? When De La Rosa (1998) polled fifty students who attended an alternative school after dropping out of a traditional school, 90% of these students responded either that they needed further education for employment purposes. Of those same students, nearly 60% dropped out because they "hated school" or "disliked their teacher" (p. 271). Contrary to common misconception, these students clearly appreciated the value education played in their lives, yet the learning environment at their traditional school was unbearable. De La Rosa (1998) states that high school drop outs cost the nation multiple billions of dollars in social programs that compensate for traditional schooling's inadequacies (p. 268). Dugger and Dugger (1998) confirmed the effectiveness of alternative high schools at ebbing drop out rates provided that the schools implemented proven strategies for dealing with at risk youth. If some sort of action is not taken – presumable at the school level – there will be widespread social ramifications. Preventative measures – an adaptive, alternate education option – are clearly necessary.

Alternative education has not been without criticism. Loflin (2000) notes that there is a stigma built up against alternative education because of common misuse of the term: One frequently finds that alternative schooling is used as a disciplinary device where "bad kids are sent to be 'fixed' and then reassimilated." These false representations of alternative education's theoretical background undermine the progressive strides made by proponents of flexibility and choice in the classroom. Implementation of alternative education is not accomplished through a naming ritual, but rather through conscientious, purposeful action on the part of schools and communities to serve the educational needs of their students.

## Alternative Education In Washington State

Alternative education has undergone many changes since its emergence. Current legislation, the Public School Alternative Learning Experience Programs, WAC 392-121-182 (2005), sets the following provisions for the development of alternative education programs in Washington State:

- Certified teachers and staff will develop a written plan for alternate learning experience – including curricula, course content, and standards – for students. Students are supervised, monitored, assessed, and evaluated by certified teachers and staff
- Work may be completed as online course or other off-site course, however students are expected to have weekly contact with certified staff
- Full-time students are assessed using the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) at least annually
- Each district must make annual reports to OSPI concerning student learning plans, student evaluations and assessments, and student enrollment in alternate learning experiences
- Alternate learning experience must satisfy state board of education requirements for equivalent courses of study pursuant to chapter 180-50 WAC

These rules focus primarily on ensuring that if state funding is used to support alternative learning experiences, those students will be held to identical standards as those who attend traditional schools. This differs from the attitudes expressed by Bruno, Hair, and Rasp (1972) who suggest that parents and citizens do not wish for the system to make decisions on their behalf. That is to say, alternative education has shifted to allow for a great deal of centralized input. More specifically, increased pressure from NCLB has limited flexibility once experienced in alternative learning contracts.

Despite these changes, alternative education continues to grow as a movement in Washington State. In 1999, the number of full-time students enrolled in alternative learning experiences in Washington State exceeded 12,000 persons in 136 programs (Johansson, 1999, p. 1). By the 2005-2006 academic year, 281 programs identified themselves as alternative schools, more than doubling the 1999 total (OSPI). These programs comprise a broad spectrum of learning institutions whose sole true commonality is serving the students and the community. However, Jan-Olav Johansson's study (1999) suggests that alternative learning contracts should generally be structured following one of three models:

- Alternative school with alternative learning experience option provides positive learning environment for at-risk students who feel deficient at learning and have endured regular educational failure. Students are allotted a great deal of flexibility through multiple options, schedule accommodations, and academic support
- Alternative program using alternative learning experience provides student options for completing high school without enrolling at a different school. Again, students have typically endured regular academic failure. Differs from alternative school model in that parents are expected to participate in periodic evaluations of student growth
- Parent-partnered program using the alternative learning experience provides option for self-directed learners. High student interest level guides development of curriculum and learning goals (pp. 12-14)

According to Johannson, the “alternative learning experience funding structure and flexibility was an opportunity to meet a great and growing need of students and families in their community and therefore keep expanding alternative education enrollment, services, and options” (p. 21).

Unfortunately, many students are still identified as at-risk of failing to meet standards and/or dropping out. Despite successful alternative education programs implemented in the Seattle School District (Packard, 2005), Peoria, Illinois School District (De La Rosa, 1998), and elsewhere, certain students are not succeeding in the pursuit of their education at traditional schools. Simply creating alternatives to a faulty system is inadequate as alternatives will not always be available to all whom have need. Bruno, Hair, and Rasp’s (1972) observe that the goals for Washington State’s common schools – respecting the uniqueness of each learner, utilize entire community to maximize experiential education, extend learning beyond school, etc. – imply that “well defined and implemented alternative programs ought to be the rule, not the exception” (p.3). Though current educational policy concentrates excessively on uniform standards, our laws – as well as our ethical obligation to our students – dictate that we offer care, flexibility, and responsiveness to students as a part of standard education, not as an alternate.

### **Narrative of Classroom Observation**

*7:30 – 8:00, Arrival*

I pull into the parking lot well before the start of school. Few students are present as the buses have yet to complete their routes. I enter the main office where two students greet me at the front desk. I receive my visitor pass and exchange brief pleasantries with the principal and secretaries. I quickly excuse myself to meet with my mentor teacher, knowing that the day will be busy and our time to explicitly discuss pedagogy is limited.

Upon my entering the classroom, my mentor pulls me over to her library. She recommends several texts and resources:

- Berthoff, A.E. (1990). *The sense of learning*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook.
- Linklater, K. (1976). *Freeing the natural voice*. New York: Drama Book Specialists.
- Myers, M. (1996). *Changing our minds: Negotiating English literacy*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Zaragoza, N. (2002, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) *Rethinking language arts: Passion and practice*. New York: Routledge.

She also recommends several online resources:

- American Library Association’s Banned Books Week information page at <http://www.ala.org/ala/oif/bannedbookweek/bannedbookweek.htm>
- Read Write Think at <http://readwritethink.org>
- The Web English Teacher at <http://www.webenglishteacher.com>
- The Doucette Library of Teaching Resources: Children’s Literature (K-12) Index at <http://www.educ1.ucalgary.ca/litindex/>

Theses resources will be discussed in the “Strategies” section.

After that whirlwind of information – tailor-made to meet our time constraints – students begin filtering in and out of the classroom to say good morning. I will continue to observe my mentor throughout the day and document other pedagogic strategies I view.

#### *8:00 – 9:15, Counseling*

My mentor’s first period alternates with a preparatory period Mondays and Wednesdays and a counseling period Tuesdays and Thursdays (she is both the school’s language arts teacher and the counselor). During this counseling period, my mentor meets with several students who have made appointments to receive support with a variety of issues. My mentor informs each student that I am a student-teacher hoping to enhance my communication skills with students, and asks each if they would mind my presence during the counseling sessions. Surprisingly – or perhaps not – each consents.

Over the course of the next seventy-five minutes, my mentor works with each student to discuss the following concerns:

- Fulfilling graduation expectations for mathematics and English credits
- Pursuing child support for a new mother who has recently returned to school
- Planning anticipated absence due to upcoming pregnancy
- Creating a correspondence course plan for a student who is living twenty miles from school to avoid an unsafe home situation
- Discussing how recent changes in medication are affecting a student in daily activities

The connection between student and teacher is powerful. While I do not possess a certification as a counselor, I can certainly learn from my mentor’s model as a genuinely caring teacher. She is prepared to support her students with any issue, regardless of severity. The school encourages this closeness: In addition to this counseling period, students meet with each teacher once every two weeks to revisit and construct individualized educational goals.

#### *9:20 – 10:30, Advanced English*

Students arrive, and my mentor spends a few moments making announcements. The day’s activities begin: The class, having just finished reading Kurt Vonnegut’s *Slaughterhouse-Five*, will be viewing the movie. The class is given a variety of tasks, ranging from guided notes to art projects to essays. Over the course of the film, students work on the following tasks that each student selects pursuant to his or her learning needs:

- One student paints throughout the film
- Several students peer over computers while working on other writing assignments
- A group of students is working on an illustrated storyboard for the film that the class will use to contrast the film against the novel
- Other students are individually working on a guided notes sheet for the film

As the film plays, my mentor frequently conjectures, “I don’t remember if this part was in the book, do you all know?” downplaying her own acute familiarity with the novel to encourage students to pay keen attention to subtle differences between novel and film. Furthermore, this focuses student awareness on the central ideas for a future lesson involving comparing the film and the novel even though students are engaging today’s lesson differently.

*10:45 – 12:00, Writing Lab*

Writing lab is a course designed for students to work on improving either writing for other classes or personal/creative writing. Tuesday is generally a day for producing written work while Thursday is reserved for collaborative peer editing activities. Each student has brought several pages of written material to share. Students assemble in prearranged groups and take turns reading their writing aloud to the group. Both before and after reading, the student asks his or her partners for specific feedback in areas of that student's choosing. Many of the students are using a WASL writing rubric and asking for comments on detail elaboration, organization structure, and grammatical conventions. When the groups finish, students begin applying feedback to editing their writing.

*12:00 – 12:30, Lunch*

Lunch is a busy time: A group of boys from the self-contained middle school rush into the classroom to borrow seating cushions for their silent reading period; students drop off their book bags; a bit of grading is completed; a student begins working at a computer. My mentor and I visit the faculty lounge where a parent has brought tamales for the teachers' lunches. Time is far too brief – my mentor cannot finish her lunch – and the afternoon sessions are signaled by a bell.

*12:30 – 1:45, Homeroom*

Homeroom is a unique curricular option where students are provided an opportunity to pursue additional academic interests and work with different faculty or students. Courses offered include GED Support, Connecting to the Community College, Pottery, Outdoor Skills, and Computer Skills. My mentor teacher is facilitating a community initiative course. Students are encouraged to determine significant issues facing their school and to proactively address these issues. For example, the class created and submitted a poll to the entire study body of 250 and charted which issues students felt were most important. As a response, students constructed a community action plan to address racism, sexism, and homophobia used in casual conversation in the school.

Since many of the seniors were absent due to a field trip to Bellevue Community College, the class was predominantly occupied with a large art project, creating banners for back-to-school night. Students immediately began working, and class-appointed project leads designated responsibilities for the period. Though the atmosphere was casual and friendly with much conversation, the posters were diligently constructed until the bell sounded.

*1:50 – 3:00, Staff Meeting*

During the staff meeting, each teacher shares current happenings in the classroom. These are typically curricular or behavioral. All teachers take a vested interest in each student's learning. Support is offered upon request. This meeting also includes time for school-wide planning. The faculty discusses the school's academic goals, future plans for homeroom electives, and upcoming events. I assume that any other necessary concerns would also be addressed at this time.

*3:00 – 3:10 Departure*

My mentor excuses herself as she must attend to confidential matters involving a student. The school is largely empty due to the staff meeting. The principal is otherwise occupied, so I thank the secretary for the visit. I return to my vehicle and exit the parking lot, a good deal of research on my plate.

### **Reflection on Observation**

Through this observation, I am able to note the following salient differences between alternative education and my student teaching experiences at a “typical” high school:

#### *Regular Meetings to Discuss Student Progress*

At this alternative high school, students meet with each of their teachers once every two weeks—at the beginning and end of two week academic terms. At these meetings, students discuss academic progress, goals for the term, and goals for future terms. Teachers are engaged with their community of learners. This type of support is clearly beneficial for all students, yet it is not offered to many students. During my student teaching, students were expected to attend a single advisory session. Only certain teachers provided support, and these teachers were expected to meet simultaneously with as many as thirty persons. It is absurd to think that this type of meeting could provide all students with sufficient support.

#### *Maternity Support*

This alternative education program offers services to young mothers. Without such support, approximately twenty-five students would be unable to continue their education without considerable strain. I have rarely seen such support in a standard high school. With such emphasis placed on abstinence education in place of sexual education, it is unsurprising that schools often attempt to extract evidence of the deficiencies of such programs.

#### *Differentiated Assessment*

Each student pursues his or her own unique education plan. Although the work each student completes will be reflected in terms of points that correspond to partial academic credits, the needs of each student are never assumed to be the same. At a standard high school all students are presumed to be en route to graduation, whereas students in alternative education may pursue graduation, a G.E.D., suddenly transfer into community college, or cease further schooling, and the school seeks to assist each student in attaining these goals. As a result, teachers craft individual assessments that focus on individual goals: If a student wishes to obtain a G.E.D., evaluation will be aligned with those standards; if a student plans to apply to a college, the teacher will provide grades aimed at pushing the student towards collegiate-level work.

#### *Authentic Student Involvement in Developing School Policies and Resources*

While many schools allow certain students minimal participatory privileges in school decision making processes, alternative education empowers students through genuine involvement in policymaking. The school is viewed as truly serving the community, and the students are understood as members of that community. It is therefore crucial that students are encouraged to be legitimately involved in the functionality of their school. Students determine social and academic issues and propose methods to improve the situation, suggest community service

activities, and are involved in certain faculty meetings. Such an environment allows students are allowed to develop into independent citizens.

## **Pedagogic Strategies**

Through my observations of alternative education classrooms and reading recommended by my mentor, I have attained/reaffirmed the following teaching practices:

### *Teach Banned Books at Any Opportunity*

Many students within alternative education programs have experienced considerable friction between themselves and [what they perceive to be] repressive authority figures. The study of banned books provides an intrinsic hook for these students as it provides a means of sanctioned, productive rebellion against restrictive forces. Further, combating censorship within the classroom reinforces the core American rights to free speech, free expression, and free publication.

### *Encourage Student Use of Technology, Creation of Resources*

It is generally accepted that students are prone to engage with technologically enhanced learning. The alternative classroom I visited takes this a step further, wherein the teacher uses the students to generate technological learning devices that are employed in future lessons. This allows for true student ownership of the curricula, even when subject matter may not fully meet personal interest.

### *Downplay Own Expertise*

While many teachers effectively cultivate student-centered learning by forcing students to assume the role of expert, most teachers ultimately fall into a didactic role to answer difficult questions. My mentor teacher refrains from sinking into this trap by feigning absolute ignorance towards her own questions. She is a capable literary critic, yet she will not provide students with her expertise when their role is to interpret literature themselves. Each and every time a student would pose a question, she would respond, “I don’t know. What do you think?” Students were forced to assume an empowered position in the classroom, one in which their knowledge was truly validated.

### *Differentiated Instruction*

Not all students share common educational goals. It is therefore impractical to assess students with uniform parameters. Alternative education recognizes this reality, and seeks to craft learning experiences that can be adapted and assessed in accordance with each student’s individual needs.

### *Address Local and Global Issues*

The most worthwhile activities presented in Zargoza’s *Rethinking Schools* are those that address local issues which may or may not be relevant in a universal context. This is the crux of the grassroots political contexts that have developed alternative education programs, and it is reflected in the schools’ empowerment of students in the community.

### *Intensive Student Support*

The principal at the alternative schools comments, “No one departs this school feeling as if they failed because of the school.” The infrastructure set in place at a school should not allow students to drift through the system. Each student should be identified, nurtured, and advocated for so long as he or she attends the school.

### *Speaking Openly*

Linklater’s *Freeing the Natural Voice* provides a variety of methods for actors to develop expressive speech. My mentor explained to me that these techniques have allowed her a greater command of the affective expression necessary to counsel at risk students. Further, the use of dramatic voice allows many of my mentor’s students to powerfully express themselves.

### *Interpretive Focus*

In *The Sense of Learning*, Berthoff suggests that emphasizing literal comprehension of reading sterilizes the literary experience by oppressive the reader’s interpretive tendencies. In order to sustain reading as a worthwhile academic subject, Berthoff argues that educators must focus on the construction of meaning through interpretation.

### *Translational/Critical Literacy*

Mysers’ translational/critical literacy expands typical understanding of critical literacy – analysis of root causes – with the pragmatic necessity for students to become versed in technological discourses. Translational literacy occurs as students become fluent in utilizing new technological languages as a means of expression.

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## Appendix

Introducing *The Grapes of Wrath*  
Introduction/Review of Reciprocal Teaching  
Reciprocal Teaching of *The Grapes of Wrath*  
with Independent Project  
Dramatic Performance of *The Grapes of Wrath*  
Resources Used in Development of Unit

### Identification:

Lesson Title: Introducing John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*

Days 1 and 2 of 18

### Intended Learning:

EALRs Addressed:

- Reading 2.3.2 – Evaluate informational materials, including electronic sources, for effectiveness
- History 1.2 – Understand events, trends, individuals, and movements shaping United States, world, and Washington State history
- Communications 1.2 – Understands, analyzes, synthesizes, or evaluates information from a variety of sources
- Communications 2 – The student uses communication skills and strategies to interact/work effectively with others

Key skills the lesson addresses:

- Writing to explore literary themes
- Conducting effective online research
- Effective presentation of information

Age-appropriate example to convey concept or skill:

- Simulation activity to understand historical experience during Dust Bowl

Specific learning objective(s):

- Students will attain affective appreciation for The Great Depression and Oklahoma Dust Bowl through participation in simulation writing exercise
- Students will attain comprehension of The Great Depression and Oklahoma Dust Bowl through online research and presentation to the class

### Assessments:

Pre-assessments:

- Simulation Activity & Journal
- Brainstorm - The Great Depression & The Dust Bowl

Formative Assessment:

- Group research assignment
- Informal check-ins with groups

Summative Assessment:

- Group presentations with individual accountability  
(Also serves as a formative assessment of students' research tendencies)

Teaching Strategies:

Student-centered rationale for lesson:

- Simulation activity connects text to students' own experience
- Historical information and simulation provides anchors for future study of text
- Students benefit from assuming role of expert

Scripted strategic teaching questions: See procedures.

Room arrangement: Computer Lab

Differentiation:

- Both group and individual accountability in group presentations
- Independent research proposal option

Resources:

- Computer Lab
- Poster Paper
- Art Supplies (Markers, Glue, Scissors)

Teaching-Learning Procedures:

Day One:

1) Teacher introduces simulation activity with journal prompt:

“You must suddenly leave your house or apartment. All of your belongings will be left behind except a few clothes and three of your possessions. What would you take? Identify these possessions. Then explain why you selected these items. Finally, discuss your feelings concerning the items you had to leave behind.”

Students complete the writing prompt

2) Teacher directs students share with designated journal partners. Students share their journal entries in pairs

3) Teacher asks class to share some of the items students chose to bring and their explanations for doing so. Students share

4) Teacher connects exercise to experience The Great Depression and Oklahoma Dust Bowl. Teacher asks students to brainstorm what they know about each historical event. Students spend time jotting down ideas which are then shared with the class

5) While collecting written work, teacher assigns group research and presentation assignment: Students form work groups then select one of the following topics: Biographical Information on John Steinbeck, The Great Depression, or the Dust Bowl. Students with extensive preexisting knowledge are encouraged to propose an alternate, relevant topic for research. Teacher informs students that they are told that they will perform research today and tomorrow. Tomorrow, they will create posters that will inform their classmates of the ten most significant ideas concerning

their topic. Students are instructed to collect research from a minimum of five online sources and begin their research. Teacher also provides students with the rubric which will be used to evaluate presentation

Day Two:

- 1) Students are immediately instructed to continue research. Students continue researching John Steinbeck, The Great Depression, the Dust Bowl, or self-selected study area
- 2) Students analyze research in groups, offering suggestions for which ideas are most significant
- 3) Students utilize poster paper, art supplies, and online research to construct posters
- 4) Each group presents ideas. For each individual student, the following rubric will be completed:

Name:	MET	NOT MET
Evidence of contribution to construction of group poster.		
Participates in group presentation.		
Individual expresses knowledge of historical information through group presentation.		

After each group presents, students will write a reflection on what they have learned about The Great Depression and Dust Bowl as well as what they hope to learn during the course of studying *The Grapes of Wrath*. Teacher collects writing

Identification:

Lesson Title: Introduction/Review of Reciprocal Teaching  
Day 3 of 18

Intended Learning:

EALRs Addressed:

- Reading 2.1.3 – State both literal and/or inferred main ideas and provide supporting text-based details
- Reading 2.1.5 – Make predictions and inferences about an author’s beliefs and cite text-based evidence to support prediction/inference
- Reading 2.1.6 –Develop questions before, during, and after reading and use knowledge of questioning strategies to locate answers
- Communications 2 – The student uses communication skills and strategies to interact/work effectively with others

Key skills the lesson addresses:

- Use of reciprocal teaching strategies to enhance interpretive reading comprehension

Specific learning objective(s):

- Students will generate own definitions of reciprocal teaching strategies (summarizing, clarifying, generating questions, and predicting)
- Students will learn reciprocal teaching strategies
- Students will practice using reciprocal teaching

Assessments:

Pre-assessments:

- Students’ knowledge of reciprocal teaching strategies is pre-assessed by teacher during introduction to reciprocal teaching

Formative Assessment:

- Students’ attainment of basic reciprocal teaching strategies is verified by teacher through informal check-ins with pairs and class discussion following pairs activity

Summative Assessment:

- Not applicable in this lesson—students will continue to use these skills throughout reading of the novel

Teaching Strategies:

Student-centered rationale for lesson:

- Reciprocal teaching enhances reading comprehension of students of all abilities
- Interpretive reading is both an enjoyable and valuable ability to develop

Room arrangement:

- During the introductory discussion, students are seated individually, in rows.

- Students work in pairs while discussing

Differentiation:

- Not applicable: These skills anchor provide foundation for class discussions

Resources:

- Class set of John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*
- Reciprocal Teaching Guidelines:  
[http://readwritethink.org/lesson\\_images/lesson884/reciprocal-overview.pdf](http://readwritethink.org/lesson_images/lesson884/reciprocal-overview.pdf)
- Reciprocal Teaching Note Sheet:  
[http://readwritethink.org/lesson\\_images/lesson884/ReciprocalTeachingNotes.pdf](http://readwritethink.org/lesson_images/lesson884/ReciprocalTeachingNotes.pdf)

Teaching-Learning Procedures:

Day Three:

- 1) Teacher outlines the four basic reciprocal teaching strategies on the white board
- 2) Teacher asks students to provide explanations of each of the strategies, working towards basic definitions while recording students' comments on board as they share
- 3) Teacher explains to students that the class will apply these strategies to each reading assignment through the course of the novel
- 4) Teacher distributes copies of *The Grapes of Wrath*, instructing students to work in pairs and to read the first chapter of the novel
- 5) Teacher instructs students to work collaboratively to summarize the information from the chapter and to share words or ideas from the text that need to be clarified. Students discuss these questions in pairs. Teacher asks students to share examples
- 6) Teacher asks students questions that touch on facts from the chapter (e.g., Who comprises the Joad family?), interpretations of the chapter (e.g., What does the opening scene of the novel seem to suggest about the rest of the novel?), and deeper issues that go beyond the chapter (e.g., What does the opening scene of the novel imply about family structures?)
- 5) Teacher distributes copies of Reciprocal Teaching Guidelines and reads through information with students, inquiring whether or not clarification is needed
- 7) Teacher distributes copies of Reciprocal Teaching Notes and asks students to use this format for the discussion starters they will compose for each reading. Teacher informs students that they will compose six questions, one in each category, for all homework readings. Teacher instructs students to finish chapters two and three for homework, reminding students to bring completed Reciprocal Teaching Notes to use in discussion tomorrow

Identification:

Lesson Title: Reciprocal Teaching of John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*  
Days 4-16 of 18

Intended Learning:

EALRs Addressed:

- Reading 2.1.3 – State both literal and/or inferred main ideas and provide supporting text-based details
- Reading 2.1.5 – Make predictions and inferences about an author's beliefs and cite text-based evidence to support prediction/inference
- Reading 2.1.6 – Develop questions before, during, and after reading and use knowledge of questioning strategies to locate answers
- Communications 2 – The student uses communication skills and strategies to interact/work effectively with others

Key skills the lesson addresses:

- Use of reciprocal teaching strategies to enhance interpretive reading comprehension
- Use of choice medium (e.g., aesthetic arts, writing, technology) to demonstrate comprehension of novel in an independent project

Specific learning objective(s):

- Students will read and discuss a fictional literary work
- Students will use reciprocal teaching strategies (summarizing, clarifying, generating questions, and predicting)
- Students will work collaboratively to explore and discuss readings
- Students will present and discuss information orally

Assessments:

Pre-assessments:

- Not applicable

Formative Assessment:

- Teacher will observe each group's discussion and monitor for student preparedness (completion of reciprocal teaching notes as homework) and participation (contribution to group). A daily log of whether or not students were ready for class will be maintained.
- Informal check-ins on student progress towards independent project

Summative Assessment:

- Submission of all Reciprocal Teaching Notes on final discussion day
- Completion of Independent Project on final independent project work period

### Teaching Strategies:

Student-centered rationale for lesson:

- Reciprocal teaching enhances reading comprehension of students of all abilities
- Interpretive reading is both an enjoyable and valuable ability to develop

Room arrangement:

- Small group discussions occur in six prearranged, heterogeneous (gender, race, ability) groups of 4-5 persons. Desks are arranged in six small circles to promote equal communication
- During whole class discussions, the teacher facilitates discussion from the front of the room. Students rearrange desks in rows but remain in close proximity to their discussion groups so support can be provided if necessary
- On independent project days, students work in the Computer Lab

Differentiation:

- Students generate own discussions therefore a great deal of variety is present
- Students assessed primarily on completion of final products; daily work is provided minimal point value as it demonstrates engagement in learning process but not true mastery of concepts/skills
- Independently selected project alongside core class exercises
- Most difficult tasks awarded guaranteed credit
- Grade produced through conferencing with students
- Late/revised work accepted until student satisfied with mastery/grade

Resources:

- Class set of John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*
- Reciprocal Teaching Guidelines:  
[http://readwritethink.org/lesson\\_images/lesson884/reciprocal-overview.pdf](http://readwritethink.org/lesson_images/lesson884/reciprocal-overview.pdf)
- Reciprocal Teaching Note Sheet:  
[http://readwritethink.org/lesson\\_images/lesson884/ReciprocalTeachingNotes.pdf](http://readwritethink.org/lesson_images/lesson884/ReciprocalTeachingNotes.pdf)
- List of independent projects for *The Grapes of Wrath* (see below)
- Computer Lab

Teaching-Learning Procedures:

First Discussion Day (Day Four of Unit):

- 1) Prior to discussion, teacher provides a brief review of reciprocal teaching strategies
- 2) Teacher informs students that each day, they will use Reciprocal Teaching Notes in small group discussions: All group members will pose their questions to one another and discuss each question thoroughly
- 3) Teacher instructs students that during these small group discussions, students should look for questions that spark substantial debate. Teacher informs students that each group should select 2-3 of these questions to pose to the entire class

4) Teacher informs students that Monday through Thursday will be engaged with such discussions; however Friday will be spent completing an independent project in the Computer Lab. Teacher then provides students with list of independent projects, instructing students to select a topic prior to that Friday

5) See Step One under Discussion Days, below

Discussion Days (Four per Week, Ten Total):

1) Teacher instructs students to discuss the day's reading using their prepared discussion starters. During discussion, students are to record significant details. Each student is expected to contribute questions and comments to the small group discussion. Students are instructed to expand the discussion on any topics that emerge as they explore the reading. While students discuss, teacher observes each group's discussion and assesses participation and preparation.

2) When groups finish, teacher asks students to choose two questions that sparked discussion within the group to share with the whole class

3) When all groups are ready, teacher gathers the class and asks each group to share a question they have chosen. The entire class is asked to volunteer responses

4) Teacher facilitates discussion of each group's questions by calling on participants and asking questions to stimulate further conversation

5) Remind students to read next chapters and complete discussion starters using reciprocal teaching format for the next lesson.

Independent Project Days (Once per Week, Three Total):

1) Students enter Computer Lab and begin working on independent projects. Teacher is available for support throughout the period

## List of Independent Projects for The Grapes of Wrath

1. Create a fake MySpace page for a character in the book. You'll need a main page for the character that contains basic character information similar to that found on a MySpace page, as well as a blog page detailing three key scenes in which the character describes her thoughts/motivations but does not re-tell the story.
2. Write several poems, raps, or songs that express Joads' or other migrant workers' frustrations, borrowing text from the novel. Arrange a time to read/perform for the class or provide a recording.
3. Create a PowerPoint/Keynote presentation on one of the following topics Remember to select public domain images and content and site your work in MLA format on a works cited slide:
  - Compare and contrast the migrant workers of The Great Depression and The Dust Bowl with modern day migrant workers.
  - Examine how modern-day Salinas honors and remembers John Steinbeck. Graphics/pictures are a must.
  - Select an historical issue from the novel that you are interested in studying further and present your independent research (please verify appropriateness of topic)
4. Create an illustrated map of California that depicts character movement throughout the novel. Illustrate important scenes on the map. Include a single written page explaining the significance of your selections
5. Write an analytical essay in response to one of the following prompts (5 paragraph minimum, attempt this assignment will earn automatic C credit):
  - View the 1940 film based on this novel (available on video tape). Compare the film with the novel: How closely do Nunnally Johnson's screenplay and John Ford's direction follow the events and the spirit of the book? Provide specific references to both film and text.
  - Describe the role women play throughout this novel. Be sure to comment on the significance of Rose of Sharon's final act in the novel.
  - The political implications of this novel have been strongly attacked. In what ways is the novel a criticism of capitalism? Does the novel advocate communism? Defend your opinions with evidence from the novel.
  - In the beginning, each character has personal reasons for wanting to go to California. In what ways does each individual's goal change? Which people grow to see a larger purpose in life? What factors contribute to their changes?
  - Identify as many Biblical references or parallels as you can find in the novel and discuss their effectiveness as well as their meaning.

Identification:

Lesson Title: Dramatic Expressions of John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*  
Days 17 and 18 of 18

Intended Learning:

EALRs Addressed:

- Reading 2.4.1 – Analyze literary/narrative texts to draw conclusions and develop insights
- Communications 2 – The student uses communication skills and strategies to interact/work effectively with others

Key skills the lesson addresses:

- Interpretive reading comprehension

Specific learning objective(s):

- Students will demonstrate comprehension of John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* through the production of a dramatic presentation

Assessments:

Pre-assessments:

- Not applicable

Formative Assessment:

- Informal check-ins

Summative Assessment:

- Production of final presentation
- Reflection on group process

Teaching Strategies:

Student-centered rationale for lesson:

- Offering students the opportunity to complete summative assessments in non-written modalities expands cognitive function by utilizing different categories of knowing

Room arrangement:

- Small group discussions occur in six prearranged, heterogeneous (gender, race, ability) groups of 4-5 persons. Desks are arranged in six small circles to promote equal communication (Production Day)
- Desks arranged as a semicircle “theater” (Presentation Day)

Differentiation:

- Both group and individual accountability for group project
- Student inquiry and interest dictates final product

Resources:

- Class set of John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*
- List of options for dramatic presentation (see below)

Teaching-Learning Procedures:

Day Seventeen (Production Day):

- 1) Teacher informs students that, in lieu of a written exam, class will be producing short dramatic projects to present to the class
- 2) Teacher instructs students to enter their reciprocal teaching groups. Students do so. Teacher informs students they will have entire class period to choose a strategy, choose a topic, and prepare a presentation for the class. Teacher also informs students of expectation to account for each group member's contributions and provide a written draft of their presentation
- 3) Teacher instructs students to begin collaboration; students work. Teacher is available for assistance and support throughout period

Day Eighteen (Presentation Day):

- 1) Teacher provides students with 10 minutes to organize themselves prior to presentations
- 2) Students are randomly selected to present. During presentation, observing students and teacher evaluate each student using the following rubric:

Name:	MET	NOT MET
Evidence of contribution to production of dramatic project		
Participates in group presentation		
Individual expresses knowledge/interpretation of text through group presentation		

3) Once all groups have presented, teacher provides students with the following brief written reflections. Students complete reflections:

- Evaluate your group members by answering each of these questions:

Was the individual prepared to discuss the novel each day?

Did the individual have his/her turn speaking?

Did the individual let others have a turn speaking?

Did the individual listen when others were speaking?

Did you enjoy working with the individual?

- Evaluate my teaching methodology by writing 1-2 paragraphs responding to this prompt:

Did either the reciprocal teaching strategy or the dramatic presentations affect your reading of *The Grapes of Wrath*? If so, explain how your reading was impacted and why you think this is the case. If not, explain why your experience was unaffected by the reciprocal teaching strategy.

### List of Dramatic Presentation Options

**1. Analogy Strategy:** In this activity, your group should enact a personal experience that parallels in some way a scene from the reading. Make sure that you think about the tone, the urgency of the situation, and the emotions conveyed in creating a parallel situation. You will mime your parallel situation. Then, as a class, we will discuss how your enactment connects with the text

**2. Hotseating and Inner Hotseating:** In your group, a student will play the role of a character and answer questions as if at a press conference. Another student, standing behind the character, will respond as the “inner self” of the character telling what that character might be really thinking, feeling, and wanting to say

**3. Dramatic Play:** Your group will “enter into character” and act out a scene from your chapter. However, you should incorporate acting out imagined conversations and interactions between/among characters depending on your interpretation of those characters’ thoughts and feelings

**4. Missing Scenes:** Your group will create a missing scene or missing scenes that you feel were implied by the story or could have happened. You will act these out for the class and be prepared to have supporting evidence from the text that shows these scenes might have logically occurred

## Resources Used in the Development of this Unit

Read Write Think

<http://readwritethink.org>

- Curricular resources

The Grapes of Wrath @ Web English Teacher

<http://www.webenglishteacher.com/grapes.html>

- Modified and/or borrowed ideas for activities

*Rediscovering Steinbeck* published by Apple Learning Interchange

<http://edcommunity.apple.com/ali/story.php?itemID=12423>

- Modified ideas for incorporating technology in classroom
- Excellent student resources for conducting research

Penguin Publishing Teacher's Guide to *The Grapes of Wrath*

<http://us.penguin.com/static/pdf/teachersguides/grapeswrath.pdf>

- Modified ideas for essay questions
- Discovered using Doucette Library of Teaching Resources under "John Steinbeck Grapes of Wrath"

Berthoff, A.E. (199). *The sense of learning*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook

- Pedagogic emphasis on interpretive comprehension

Linklater, K. (1976). *Freeing the natural voice: Imagery and art in the practice of voice and language*. New York: Drama Book Specialists

- Pedagogic emphasis on verbal expression

Myers, M. (1996). *Changing our minds: Negotiating English literacy*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

- Use of translational/critical literacy, literary study that emphasizes traditional reading, connecting literature to our days, analyzing social impact of literature, and utilizing new technological literacies

## **Authentic Final Grading: The Methods Teachers Use**

Christopher Stockmann

### **My Rationale for Learning about Grading**

In my most recent observations of high school students' school participation, I couldn't possibly have missed the emphasis on final grades. In this specific case, during end-of-the-quarter, student-lead parent conferences, the main subject for each student was final grade in progress. My perspective, as student teacher in charge of the grade books (but not the determination methods) gave me much insight as to how this number had come to be for each student. The fact that a student couldn't possibly have known fully the methods behind her grade's determination, despite a seemingly open and accessible format, caused a nagging problem for me and my near future in a similar situation. The coincidence of: an extreme emphasis on what grade an individual student is earning, and the possibility of far from uniform methods in place to create this grade (number and/or letter) is a problem. Therefore, since I don't currently see how I will change the overall school climate of emphasis on and importance of final grades, I have tried to discover ways that grade calculation may be done differently in order to produce an authentic reflection of what a student has achieved. My initial focus was on differences of averaging methods, but I have found that the variations in systems of grading can go much deeper than this.

The process I chose in order to learn about this topic was literature based research. My main source, books, allowed me to see the common understandings of the topic and also provided interesting individual proposals of possibilities for change. I approached the design of this learning endeavor as if I was designing a course of teacher education program. A literature review of journals was my second source of information, used mainly to focus on learning what credibility there is to the idea of using a median score for a final grade, and my third source was essays, speeches or other articles or documents intended to deepen the scope of the topic and bring exposure to additional viewpoints. I've learned, most importantly, how more authentic grading can be realized, but still have not completely solved the puzzle of application in the form of a new system.

### **Historical Background of Grading at Present**

It seems that many in the realm of schooling at the secondary level take for granted the basic systematic structures that are available for grading and being graded. This can be observed in the widespread use of letter grades and numerical grade point averages throughout the country either by investigating common practice (ask a teacher what "grades" are), or in text (Brookhart, 1994; Marzano, 2000; Thomas, 2004). That is, authors reflect the state of education and norms of grading. The resultant association of numbers with learning has created a status quo for grading systems. This standard operates on numerous levels: the points earned of points possible assignment grade, the accumulation of a total percentage score from the sum of these specific scores, and the conversion of the percentage to a letter grade and later from a letter grade to a number again as grade points. Is this a complicated and confusing sequence? To anyone unfamiliar with the standard system, yes, but to secondary students, teachers or anyone who recently was a student in public secondary schools, it is probably well known and understood. While in school, we do not necessarily know where this standard system came from though.

Marzano (2000) attributed the points/percentage facet of grading to a combination of developments within the establishments of the United States Army and the College Entrance Examination Board. Beginning with the Army, multiple choice aptitude questions proved to be an economical way to sort recruits around the time of World War I. The style of using questions that could be transferred to a point score was adopted at the inception of The SAT test. This was during the 1940s, and soon after, educators and schools were modeling their scoring and reporting methods after the CEEB's. From this time on, the convention of assessing scholastic achievement through an earned percentage of possible points has been the staple of grading.

Grading implies distinction of tracks of students based on multi-level classification, and this convention has a longer history (Hargis, 1990). Colleges and later high schools devised systems for indicating relative levels of achievement levels as evidenced by policies at such 19<sup>th</sup> century institutions as Harvard and Mount Holyoke (Marzano, 2000). In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, concern had arisen about the lacking objectivity of grading especially for such ranked systems that were intended to determine whether or not students passed high school subjects (Guskey & Bailey, 2001). While a century's worth of evolution *has* provided students and teachers with a recognized standard of grading and a transferrable common numeration, there still exists the question of objectivity and therefore a question about the authenticity of a final grade. Furthermore, it is proposed that a system with the main intent of grouping or tracking students does little to actually give beneficial feedback to individual students (Hargis, 1990).

### **Components of Mainstream Scoring and Grading**

While multiple authors have indicated that the current way teachers create grades is woefully unquestioned, the truth of the structures in place as the arena into which teachers must enter makes discussion of these practices important. Teachers are expected to know how to grade students. Students, their families and those responsible for the functioning of schools obviously entrust teachers with this responsibility although teachers may have little direction in how the task is to be done. In their report, McMillan and Nash attested to the position a teacher is put in of constantly trying to be true to personal values and at the same time working in the required structure (McMillan & Nash, 2000). Incidentally, this can be seen as a cause of the lack of objectivity in grading. Teachers may use any combination of the following: points, varying percentage scales, curves, weighted graded categories, various averaging methods, inclusion/omission of specific assignments or classroom activities, extra credit/points or a number of other teacher-centered policies to create the students' grades. The teacher's attention to what is accurate for each student at the same time as what is statistically and relatively accurate can illuminate flaws within an individual's system and so a teacher may actually be searching for a balance and a way to do the impossible in a confining system. This is far from an expected, objective plan for determining scores and grades. Now, for the sake of focusing on the matter of final grading, let's assume that the challenge of scoring over the course of a grading period is met. What are the possible options now present?

### **Averaging**

Wright (1994) addressed the task of averaging as an area of open possibility that teachers can use to create more meaningful final reports. The grade a student receives may be derived from a total proportion of points or a mean of scores. When categorized scores are averaged, there is also the choice of averaging with the median or the mode, but these are seen less often. Wright makes the case for the possibility of using a median grade in simple terms writing, "mean

is only one of three measures of central tendency”, and, “median is actually the statistically correct measure of central tendency for ordinal data” (Wright, 1994). Ordinal measures, as opposed to interval, are data that aren’t consistently and uniformly spaced but only refer to a pattern of ordering. One value is consistently known to be higher or lower than another but the degree of difference between the two isn’t a fixed measure. Taking into account the processes that lead to a set of scores, it may be true that the measure is not accurate enough to merit the type of exactness implied by a percentage and Wright proposed that since there is imprecision, the data set is ordinal. The changes that accompany the median proposal are important and will be discussed.

### **Further Methods in the Single Grade Framework Compared to Median**

The median of scores is considered a viable final grade, and additionally there is a third method in use for grade tabulation: mean of a predetermined section of scores. This method may be seen when averages of all scores but the lowest are used, or when the central tendency of the most recent scores is taken as the final grade (Marzano, 2000; Guskey and Bailey, 2001).

If the goal of comparing these options for averaging is to find a grade calculation method that yields the most authentic, meaningful grade, a comparison of real data sets may lead to further skepticism. This is because, as may be expected, the change of methods causes, in some cases, a change in the student’s final grade and a change in the total distribution of grades (Guskey & Bailey, 2001). However, after examining the possible outcomes and what they mean, it can be shown that the median results is the most representative final grade while the mean is more likely to misrepresent the sum of the scores it stands for.

The grade outcome for a set a scores over a semester or similar term may differ depending on the final averaging method. At first glance, this seems like an inconsistency, but the statistical interpretation of this divergence can be useful to explain how the methods subtly vary in reporting. The consideration that Wright pointed out deals with scores that are outliers and the amount that they may skew a final average. For instance, a student that has not earned a passing grade on 80 percent of assigned, graded course material but has earned very high grades on the other 20 percent of graded assignments will likely finish with a passing grade when the mean is used. Additionally, a student receiving highest scores for 80 percent of material and failing scores for the remaining 20 percent of material will likely not receive the highest grade as a final grade if the mean is used for averaging. In both of these instances the outcome is going to be different when the median is used for averaging instead of the arithmetic mean. When using median scores, the student with highest grades 8 out of 10 will receive the highest grade as final grade for the class; the student earning failing grades 8 out of 10 will receive a failing grade as a final grade.

This example illustrates the idea of a final grade skewed by one outlying score when mean of scores determines a student’s final grade. Another method that, according to Bailey and Guskey, is used often is dropping of each student’s lowest score before calculating the mean (Guskey & Bailey, 2001). This may eliminate the skew shown above for the “A” student but would not significantly change the mean value for the failing student. Therefore in the comparison of these three approaches, different outcomes are possible and choice of method does matter.

In the realm of journals and educational literature, Wright is the greatest supporter of the median method for averaging scores and determining final grades. Some reasons for this, informed by his experiences as a teacher include the response of high achieving students to not

diminish their level of effort and achievement near the end of a scoring period (as may be expected), and the positive reaction lower achieving students had to the method (Wright, 1989, 1994). This was observed both as an increase in motivation because of an increased understanding and positive perception of the student's ability to raise the final grade and because of the increased threat of failing if sustained effort was not made. The median approach promises to disallow the chance to barely maintain a "D" more so than the mean method, and simultaneously to keep open the possibility for a final grade that will more drastically show the improvements made by a lower achieving student up to the end of the term. This observed structural support of student persistence for students in varying grade earning ranges supports the use of this method, and also theoretically is more supportive of student's varied strengths on different types of class tasks.

Practical considerations of the using the median are further explained by Wright. There is a chance for inflation of grades over the mean method. I find that another possibility that is not presented is that it may not be enough of a change. Problems are left unsolved with this method such as the meaning understood by students of their final grade. There is a need for a transparent grading system able to clearly show students meaningful feedback about learning accomplishments.

### **Correlation with Policies on Zeros**

The method of averaging scores with the median negates the disruption of a score due to inclusion of zero scores, however, since the mean is a tool so regularly in use by teachers and there is a likelihood that means may be a preliminary step in the forming of a set of scores to be averaged with a median, it is important to analyze. Although it is true that zeros can easily be assigned for missing work, and may motivate students to complete all assignments, when scores ultimately are put into the chosen calculation method to determine a final grade, zeros should not be used (Marzano, 2000; McMillan, 1999). This is because the lower limit of most grading scales is 60 percent, and increments for the passing grades are much smaller than that for a failing grade. To provide a mathematically accurate report of a student's achievement, it is recommended that a score such as 59 be used instead of zero for final tabulation tasks. This, I have observed, is difficult for some teachers to accept, but when averaging a set of scores with the mean, is more likely to produce a value with greater correlation to actual student performance.

Why would a teacher use both a mean and a median? According to Wright (1994) the most accurate way to make use of the median averaging method is to ensure that each included score is of an approximately equal weight of importance. Therefore, if categories such as formative assessments or homework were to be included in the creation of the final grade, but were individually less important than a culminating project or a unit exam, grouping and averaging of multiple scores in these categories would be appropriate. This is an example of how change in the practice of including zeros in a mean will need to be addressed regardless of the method chosen for final grade determination.

### **Other Approaches: Criterion Reference**

In the attempt to replace existing, entrenched grading styles, a number of authors have presented a new, basic reference framework that moves beyond the aforementioned structures consisting of the sequence of: questions with right or wrong answers-points-percentages-averages-a final grade. These older, traditional systems, inspired by the methods of testing

organizations, are reliant on the assumption of a normal distribution of scores. The educator's assumption of a normal distribution, in which number of average grades should be larger than the number of failing grades and high grades, is also known as "norm-referenced" grading (Marzano, 2000). An alternative, criterion-referenced system sets up the possibility for all students to achieve a high grade on each unit, if students are able to display mastery of the expected aspects of the standards covered.

With practical application of this type of grading system, it can be expected, again, that students would have good reason to persist with the effort needed for learning achievement. Marzano specified that, unlike in previous methods of grading where a whole term is somehow condensed into an average grade, with criterion-referenced grading, it is assumed that the student will progress to higher and higher amounts of mastery of each unit and that the final level reached is the appropriate grade to record. This difference indicates need for a restructuring of past ways of calculating a grade for, say, a major unit. Early scores would not be included in final scores, and tabulation would be less of an issue. The outcome is likely to be seen as more encouraging to students. For all of the aforementioned changes proposed, that is a common theme: students should not feel there is a punitive aspect in the grade due to their participation in the process of learning new material given the individual strengths and weaknesses of each individual.

### **Other Approaches: Grade book Structure/Grading Standards**

In order to keep grading records, it is necessary for teachers to arrange a grade book, in many cases in electronic format. The structure that suits the grading styles fully reliant on points and mean averages allows a teacher to enter points earned, points possible, and mathematical directives resulting in a running score toward the final grade that can be accessed by students or their families at any time. However, the grade book can also be a place to more deeply keep track of progress toward a set of learning goals (Guskey & Bailey). This model replaces the categories titled by a name of assignment or assessment on traditional spreadsheets with each learning target that the assessments and assignments focus on. Additionally, the scores a teacher enters are an indication of current progress toward mastery of the learning goal at the date of evidence. Instead of the record of a number that may be difficult to find meaning in, the teacher provides an indicative rating of a student's current noted achievement with great detail possible. This is an improvement from the simple replication of a score (a number of points) that a student already receives on returned work assessments.

### **Feedback and Final Grade**

In so many ways, it is true that our feedback to students may most authentically reach students in forms different than grades. The grading disconnect is noted by Christensen (2005) in her reflection on her own practices and the limited usefulness of grading. But the viewpoint of abandoning our grading role usually turns out to, in practice, not be possible or may not even be preferable. In a classroom situation where it is apparent that grading will occur, it is imperative that policies are intended to best contribute to learning, and it is also drastically important that communication is clear to students. Over the expanse of time that grades have been used, there is currently an opportunity for teachers to craft grades as a tool to assist students in constant assessment of progress in learning. Systems of grading that are meant not to stratify achievers but to offer opportunity for each student to successfully learn will benefit all students. The simplicity and motivation of Wright's median system, the criterion-referenced method supported

by Marzano (2000), the transformation of the grade book as a superbly accurate feedback tool (Guskey & Bailey, 2001), and the general need for change in order to reach a wider range of achievers as attested to by both Hargis (1990) and Thomas (2004) makes clear the needed work around final grades. As teachers approach grading with an attitude more of assistance to students than of opposition, it is certain that these types of modifications will be sought so as to perfect grading in two ways: increasing accuracy/objectivity and redesigning meaning in reference to the goals shared with students.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

In hindsight of my investigation into how to assign authentic final grades, I've found that the choices made by a teacher fall into two general categories: systems to turn a set of a student's scores into a single, final grade and systems to assign each of the individual scores that make up the set in the first place. I see now that the latter category is more important than the former when aiming at authenticity of grading. While the considerations around averaging are important and deserving of teachers' attention, the level to which the scoring that contributes the set of scores is of high quality will be a main determinant of the quality of the final grade. Students, their families, and professional peers in schools are aware of the confines a single-grade reporting context and should understand that the average (regardless of the determination method we choose) is just that. The implications of the total of a teacher's grading systems, though, do serve as an opportunity (that I would say should not be missed) to both give students quality feedback, and allow students to remain encouraged throughout the course of learning. The development of a grading method may even be such that averaging is abandoned for a more indicative structure.

I am personally much more excited now about the prospect of creating a grading system with the new information I have gained over the course of this research endeavor. Teachers encouraged to invest time and thought to transformations of grading would similarly see that there are clear and simple reasons to be found for changes to grading formats.

By devoting focused thought and seeking exposure to multiple viewpoints pertaining to how to give authentic, clearly earned, meaningful grades to students, teachers can greatly increase professional credibility. Grading is a responsibility that is entrusted to teachers regardless of policy. This is a sign of respect for our professional judgment from those we serve. We are therefore obligated to seek methods that result in true symbols of intentional design and the progress in learning made by students.

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## **Classroom Meetings as a Major Component of a Democratic Classroom Management Plan**

Heather Valenzuela

New teachers often struggle with classroom management. They go into teaching because they love the subjects they teach and they want to work with children to help them learn the content they will need to know. Often times, though, their classroom management skills interfere with their ability to teach. I am not ashamed to admit that I did have some difficulties with classroom management when I student taught last fall. I have had trouble finding a management style that fits my personality. I have a strong commitment to creating a democratic community of learners. For this reason, I decided to explore the subject of democratic classroom management in greater depth. How exactly can I create a classroom that is safe and where students treat each other and me with respect?

One of the first articles I retrieved from the ERIC database was *Teaching the Skills of Social Behavior: An Examination of Teaching Mainstream Expectations to Students in the Margins*, which focused on class meetings. Class meetings refer to a time specifically set aside for students and the teacher to talk in an environment which is safe and supportive. The article was written by Barbara McEwan Landau, who wrote *The Art of Classroom Management*, on which our learning last year about classroom management was largely based. She found that class meetings promote self-discipline and build a learning community where the teacher is not in the position of constantly monitoring individual student behavior. Moreover, it was found that when class meetings were skipped, students seemed to regress to a less managed state. Students also used the conflict-management skills they had learned even when the teacher was not directly present, for example at recess. This study was conducted for two years with 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade students at a school that is culturally and socioeconomically diverse (Landau, 2000).

Because of what I read in this article, and since democratic classroom management is a very broad topic, I decided to narrow the focus of my paper to primarily class meetings. I also remembered thinking that holding class meetings was a good idea when I read Landau (2004) and that I had included it in the democratic management plan I wrote last year. However, because my mentor teacher did not use class meetings, I also failed to do so. Once I decided on my topic, I searched for sources on democratic classroom management and class meetings. A resource which helped me to find many other sources was *Class Meetings as a Tool for Classroom Management and Character Development: An Annotated Bibliography* by Rose R. Bohmann (2003).

In this paper I will share tips for class meetings from many different sources, as well as information I learned from interviewing teachers who use class meetings in their classrooms. I will end with my plan to use class meetings in my second student teaching experience and beyond.

### **How Do You Hold A Class Meeting?**

There are many different ways to hold a class meeting, as well as many different goals meetings are intended to accomplish. In addition, methods and goals will vary with the teacher's personality and teaching style. Some teachers can implement democratic classroom management without formal meetings, but most of the resources I found made a strong case for setting aside a specific, regularly-planned time to hold class meetings. I will continue to use the term class

meetings, but the terms morning meeting, circle-up, problem-solving circle, and class discussion can also be used.

There were many commonalities in the literature I read with regard to class meetings. Circular seating is recommended as a way to ensure equality. Think King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. A circle also ensures all participants can see and hear each other (Marshall, 2001; Styles, 2001, p. 41). Chairs are most often recommended as desks tend to interfere with the process (Lickona, 1991, p. 154). Sitting on the floor is also an option, but in that case the teacher needs to be at the same level as the students, and some teachers find students are more attentive if chairs are used.

Another commonality is that the meeting is a forum for students' voices to be heard and for them to have a sense of power and control in the classroom. This is the very definition of democracy (Gathercoal, 1993). Also, consequences are seen as a learning experience, and are therefore non-punitive and never intended to embarrass or humiliate students (Charney, 2002; Nelsen, Lott, & Glenn, 2000).

Landau (2004) provides general recommendations for how to hold a class meeting. She suggests having a plan or agenda to keep the meeting on track. This can be either student-generated or teacher-generated with the students having the opportunity to add items as needed. She also recommends never using student names in order to focus on discussing issues, not people. The meeting is expected to stay on one topic at a time, students are not forced or coerced into participating, and a class journal is maintained. There is flexibility, though, about how class meetings can be used, and time limits range from 10 to 45 minutes depending on the age of the students and the amount of time the teacher spends with the group weekly.

Styles (2001) describes a specific model for class meetings. They are held once a week, are student-led, and always follow the same format. The teacher plays the role of secretary. During the week, students put problems and suggestions in a class meeting box. The agenda consists of opening the meeting, encouraging the leader, dealing with old business, discussing new business, thanks and compliments, and closing the meeting. In the encouragement circle, which is always second on the agenda, each participating student and the teacher is required to make an encouraging comment about the student leading the class meeting. Students may pass, but only the first time around; they are expected to participate the second time around. Encouragement focuses on the student's personality, talents, an area of strength, or an area in which the student has improved, and not on physical appearance or possessions. Old business is revisited before new business is discussed. Thanks and compliments are optional at the end of the meeting, if time permits, and can be directed at all students, not just the leader.

The main difference between the approach described in Styles (2001) and Landau (2004) is that Styles does require students to use their names on their problems slips and to name the person(s) involved. She believes this holds students accountable for their actions, as they have to explain themselves when the problem is discussed at the meeting, and that this gives student(s) the chance to admit or deny statements made by another student. Dreikurs, Cassel, and Ferguson (2004) add that if a teacher does choose to describe problems without using names, the students will identify themselves. Styles also recommends voting on possible solutions, with an obvious majority usually necessary in choosing a solution. Other authors disagree with using voting in class meetings, instead focusing on reaching a consensus—or unanimous decision. While voting may be more representative of our actual government in some cases, in a small setting like a classroom it is not unreasonable to seek consensus, or at least a solution the whole class can live with. The benefits of having regularly scheduled meetings include the fact that the solution can

be revisited and/or analyzed for effectiveness at the next meeting. Thus students only have to “live with” decisions for a set amount of time, a day, 2 days, a week, etc.

The Positive Discipline books also have a very specific model for class meetings. Nelson, Lott, and Glenn (2000) describe eight building blocks which are demonstrated in early class meetings: forming a circle, practicing compliments and appreciations, creating an agenda, developing communication skills, learning about separate realities (understanding and respecting differences), recognizing the four reasons people do what they do (undue attention, misguided power, revenge, and assumed inadequacy), Practice role-playing and brainstorming, and focus on non-punitive solutions. Once the building blocks are understood, the class meeting follows the following format: Compliments and appreciations, follow up on prior solutions, agenda items, and future plans. The agenda can include feelings shared while others listen and discussion of problems without fixing, as well as help solving problems.

Nelson, Lott, and Glenn (2000) recommend having class meetings daily, as they feel it is preferable to have a ten or twenty minute meeting each day rather than a thirty or forty-five minute meeting each week. This does allow more frequent checking-in with students, but Landau (2004) as well as other authors stress flexibility and the importance of teachers deciding what works best for their students and themselves. Nelson, Lott, and Glenn (2000) also stress focusing on solutions instead of consequences and recommend allowing either the student who added the problem to the agenda or the student who is named in the problem to choose the solution they feel is appropriate, instead of letting all students vote. Passing a stick, card, yarn ball, or stuffed animal around the circle can help students remember that one student is allowed to speak at a time, and the other students are expected to practice their listening skills.

William Glasser, M.D. recommends teaching his theory, called choice theory, using class meetings and provides specific guidelines for meetings one through four, which are too lengthy to discuss here (Glasser, 1998, pp. 102-112). Ruth Sidney Charney also provides an excellent format for holding class meetings, especially ones focused on problem-solving (Charney, 2002, pp. 287-304).

### **What Do Teachers Who Use Class Meetings Have To Say?**

The first interview I conducted was with a third grade teacher who works at Park Lodge Elementary in Lakewood, WA. He taught 5<sup>th</sup> grade for many years, and as my endorsement areas are grade 5 and up, I asked him to especially remember his experiences using class meetings with older children. His commitment to a democratic environment was very evident in his classroom. “Rights and Responsibilities” are posted, as opposed to rules. He uses class meetings twice a week in his self-contained classroom. The format follows that found in the Positive Discipline books. He doesn’t use punishments and rewards in his classroom. Individual students are presented with “necessary reminders” for behavior that is obviously not acceptable. After three reminders, they fill out a reflection slip, after the fourth time they may be referred to the office. He has his third graders rate themselves at the end of the day, and he had his fifth graders rate the class’s day. He also had the fifth graders lead the meetings themselves.

His reason for using class meetings was to build community, so that all student voices would be heard, and to teach the value of committee work and consensus. He empathized with my difficulties in student teaching and said, as many books I read agreed, that building community takes time; he estimated about three months. He made a clear difference between being in charge of the class and being in control. He says he is always in charge, but he does not

have to be controlling because of the community he has set up. He said that working democratically is tough, but rewarding.

When I asked if he notices a difference when he skips class meetings, he said yes, he does. He finds he is not as happy, and the students do less self-governing; they depend more on the teacher to solve problems. When we talked about using class meetings at the middle or high school level, as I plan to, he said he did use class meetings when he worked with seventh graders. Other teachers in the school did not, instead assigning more traditional punishments, like frequent detentions. He believes that you cannot “nickel and dime” kids in this fashion.

Another teacher I interviewed teaches at Lincoln Elementary in Olympia, WA. She teaches a self-contained, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade class. She uses class meetings a lot at the beginning of the year, but then not as formally as the year progresses, probably about weekly as things come up. She says the meetings develop a sense of community and encourage participation. She focuses the meetings on a guiding question, provides an opportunity for all voices to be heard, and discusses consequences as needed. She says she has found that students often propose harsher consequences than she would have and she has to temper their decisions at times.

A high school teacher who works at Choice High School in Shelton, WA said that she does not use class meetings as regularly as she would like, or as regularly as she did previously, but she does use them as issues arise. She feels they are very useful, especially in establishing a “good foundation” for the class, which facilitates functioning on a deeper academic level with students. She frequently uses a stuffed animal or other object to pass around, with the student holding the item being the one allowed to speak. The school has guidelines which assist her in holding class meetings: mutual respect, attentive listening, right to pass, and no put-downs.

Another high school teacher I interviewed also allowed me to observe class meetings in two of his classes. He teaches at Black Hills High School in Tumwater, WA. He believes in class meetings as a space for everyone to voice their ideas, not so much as a place to discuss classroom rules. He develops an agenda based on what the students have to say. The lesson I observed focused on capitalism and poverty and was very student-centered. The first thing that he did after his students arrived in the classroom in each period was to change their seating arrangement. He has a pre-service teacher observing one day a week as part of her practicum in his classroom. It is the case that she developed the seating chart, although she was not present the day I observed. He said that he did not want to discuss the seating chart at that time, but that the last 15 minutes of class was reserved for a class meeting where the students could bring up any problems, thoughts, etc. about the seating chart.

After the lesson was completed in the first period I observed, the class was very eager to share their thoughts on the seating chart. Many hands went up, and students waited to be called on before speaking. When students occasionally shouted out things, he reminded them that he wanted to hear all their concerns – but in order. He wrote the ideas that the class generated on the board. The problems were not exactly resolved, no one’s seat was changed, but the teacher suggested that he email the pre-service teacher who created the lesson plan and include the class’s questions and suggestions. This seemed to be accepted by the class as an adequate first step.

The next period, the students seemed to be more interested in the suggestion that they just sit wherever they wanted than on any suggestions modifying the existing seating chart. The teacher brought up the question of how the pre-service teacher who made the chart would feel if she arrived the next Thursday and they weren’t using the chart she worked hard to make. He did ask the class what other teachers do, though, and the class volunteered examples of other

teachers at the school, mostly ones who do let them sit where they want. Again, the issue was deferred until the teacher could discuss it with the generator of the seating chart.

While it might seem that nothing was accomplished in these two class meetings and fifteen minutes of class time was “wasted” in both instances, in fact what I observed fits well into the reasons and goals for having class meetings. The students did seem to feel a sense of community, both during the class meeting and during the lesson which preceded it. They accepted the teacher’s authority and did a pretty good job of not grumbling and complaining about changing seats when asked to. They settled in and were attentive and engaged during the lesson. I contrast this to one time where I changed the seating chart during my student teaching and I then wasted probably more than fifteen minutes discussing and deciding in individual cases whether to make changes before I was even able to start the lesson. If I said no when students asked to change, they were sullen and unwilling to focus on the lesson.

### **What Will I Do Now?**

I am convinced that class meetings are a good idea and I would like to try them in student teaching this year and hopefully in my future teaching experiences as well. I think that class meetings will fit my personality because they are very democratic. They will allow me to hear what my students think in a structured way, though. One of the problems I had with classroom management during student teaching was how to focus on academics and classroom management at the same time. Although I realize class meetings will not magically solve all the problems that might occur during lessons, I feel they will allow me to enforce expectations and save a lot of issues which come up to be discussed at a later date (as in the seating chart example). I firmly believe that class meetings will help me to establish an atmosphere of safety, caring, and mutual respect in my classroom.

I do not think that I will be able to use class meetings every day during student teaching; I will aim for once a week. The first meeting will probably be the longest, and will allow me to introduce myself to the students I will work with as well as learning what things they are interested in doing. Because they will already be a community, I will focus on becoming a member of what they and my mentor teacher have established, as well as hopefully helping to strengthen it.

My ideal class meeting would have me as a facilitator, and with a student as recorder, to be rotated among volunteers. We will keep a class journal with the minutes of each meeting. We will start with each student sharing something that they want to share with the class about what is going on in their lives. I might have to limit the time each student has to do this, as I learned when I asked my student-teaching students to share something they did over the weekend. Some were willing to talk for the whole period. Next we will revisit old business to see if our solutions are working. Then we will bring up new business. I will use a variety of ways to discuss possible solutions, including calling on volunteers, asking each student what they think about the situation—going around the circle with students having right to pass, and the strategy where students discuss with a neighbor student before sharing what they think with the rest of the class (think-pair-share). If we have time, I would love to close the meeting with thanks and compliments. At first, high school students might think this is cheesy or silly, but I think if they give it a chance they will enjoy it.

My mom is a substitute teacher, so I empathize strongly with the guests who take over our classes when we must be away. Anecdotal evidence suggests that classes which have a strong sense of community and mutual respect maintain control even when the primary teacher is

not present, which would be another good reason to use class meetings in my future teaching experiences.

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## Appendix

In case you are still not convinced to use class meetings in your classes, Sonya Schmick (1998) performed a qualitative study on class meetings and conflict resolution. She taped class meetings, conducted interviews of individual students, and surveyed the entire class. (Her study took place in a suburban elementary school in Oregon – grades 4 and 5.) She discovered that students did enjoy class meetings, found them helpful, and had excellent conflict management skills. They were able to explain clearly the steps necessary to resolve a conflict, in alignment with “major conflict resolution theorists.” (Schmick, 1998)

The results of her student survey are below:

I think class meetings are...

Very important – 45%

Kind of important – 50%

Not very important – 5%

Not important at all – 0%

I think the most important benefit of class meetings is...

Giving and receiving meaningful compliments – 27%

Solving problems with other people – 55%

Feeling more comfortable with my classmates – 18%

I think that class meetings...

Help students solve problems well – 71%

Give the appearance of solving problems but the problems still exist – 19%

Don't really help students solve problems – 10%

Outside of school, I use the class meeting problem solving methods to:

Solve most of my problems with other people – 27%

Solve some of my problems with other people – 37%

Solve few or none of my problems with other people – 36%

The survey size was 22 students, who remained anonymous and were encouraged to answer honestly (Schmick, 1998).

**Reference** (for this Appendix only)

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## Transitioning Techniques in the Primary Classroom

Leia Vandersnick

Every day during my fall student teaching, I felt that I wasn't finishing my planned lessons and therefore not fully developing the teaching and learning I had hoped to accomplish. As I have reflected on it for the last few months, I have come to believe that I lost a significant amount of time transitioning from one activity to another. My troubles were compounded because of the size of the school. Not only was it comparable to a small community college with a central cluster of buildings, but our classroom was at the farthest end from central school locations such as the cafeteria. My mentor teacher had her techniques, which did not suit my teaching style; I could not (nor did I want to) muster the authority in my voice that she commanded with ease. Over the course of my research, I have begun to start a collection of transition techniques as well as to meaningfully understand that a democratic classroom management style will work for me.

I started my research by looking at text sources discussing transitions. It wasn't surprising that some of the research focused on the experiences of the inexperienced: student teachers. These practical and theoretical sources lead me to investigate seminal studies in classroom management such as Kounin's *Discipline and Group Management in Classrooms* (1977). In addition to academic studies, I gathered practical tips from classroom teachers. I interviewed two teachers and observed three classrooms from one to six hours, from which I have been able to pull practical techniques for transitions and help to solidify my interest in adopting a democratic classroom management style.

### Transition Complications—Theory

In his book, Kounin describes two categories of issues that cause delays in the “movement management” of a classroom: jerkiness and slowdowns (1977, p. 92). These issues are teacher created. Jerkiness or anti-smoothness can be influenced by a number of situations—stimulus-boundedness, thrusts, dangles and truncations, and flip-flops. Following are brief descriptions. Stimulus-boundedness is when a teacher is occupied with some teaching activity, and he or she gets distracted by an insignificant object or behavior, interrupts the activity to attend to it, and then the teacher returns to the original activity. Thrusts are when the teacher does not take into account his or her students' readiness for the transition (sudden transition); thrusts can occur during transitions as well as within an activity. Dangles occur when a teacher suspends the movement of the activity. In a transition case, the teacher could initiate a change of activity, start it, then move to attend to something unrelated, and finally return to the original activity. During an activity, a teacher could be prompting students for question answers, suddenly pause to attend to some unrelated issue, and finally return to the original prompting. Truncations are similar to dangles but the teacher does not return to the original activity in a truncation. Flip-flops occur when a teacher transitions from one activity to another. After starting the second activity, the teacher returns to the first activity for some missed detail (e.g. further explanation of homework) (Kounin, 1977).

Kounin (1977) describes two types of slowdowns: over-dwelling and fragmentation. Over-dwelling involves the teacher paying excessive or undue attention to some behavior or thing. Kounin breaks over-dwelling down into behavior, actone, and prop categories. Behavior over-dwelling involves the teacher nagging a student about his or her behavior; actone over-

dwelling has the teacher focusing on a sub-part of a behavior (e.g., the way a student is holding a pencil); and prop over-dwelling is when the teacher is distracted and occupied by a missing or extraneous prop involving a student in a group that the teacher is not actively working with at the time (e.g., the teacher notices a student doing seatwork is without a pencil and hassles that student about her missing pencil to the distraction of the work of the group at hand).

Fragmentation occurs when teachers break activities into subparts that are superfluous. He describes group fragmentation, when the teacher instructs students to make a transition one at a time (e.g., reading group is dismissed from the circle to return to their desks but must return one at a time). Prop or actone fragmentation is when the teacher breaks a task like putting away math materials and taking out reading materials into distinct sub tasks (e.g., close your math book, put your correcting pencil away, put the math book in your desk, take out your regular pencil, take out your reading book, sit up straight, open your reading book). This prop/actone fragmentation is notable when the transition is rather simple, which the students could handle rather smoothly without the minute instruction (Kounin, 1977).

Arlin's research suggests that off-task behaviors during transitions as well as during lessons were less significant in classrooms where the teacher's management style was more democratic (1979). That means to me that students need to be more independent. But how do you do that with first graders? During my fall student teaching, students could not complete the morning worksheet without a verbal explanation of the directions from me while I was frantically checking in every student for homework collection.

### **Independent Learners**

Transition routines should be taught explicitly to students to help to alleviate loss of time and order in the classroom without the teacher being in direct control (Valentine, 2007).

Valentine's suggestions include reviewing expectations, giving advance warnings, and teaching students what to do after the warning. In her experience the last point was important. Even after giving students expectations and time warnings, her students were not using the wrap-up time efficiently. Through a series of role-plays, she and a few students modeled how to use the time after a warning: first find a good stopping point in one's work, then clean up and organize materials. Practice continued for a time after this introduction periodically by announcing the five-minute warning and asking students to share their plans. To help the students establish a sense of control, a variety of ways to execute transitions were eventually shared (Valentine, 2007).

When I think of an independent student who can be self-directed and motivated in his or her education, I immediately see a student who can read proficiently. But I am mistaken. According to Cohen and deBettencourt (1983), teaching pre-reading students how to develop some autonomy isn't impossible; it just requires some creative techniques. They offer a model in which the students' responsibilities are following directions, approaching tasks, obtaining assistance, gaining feedback, and gaining reinforcement; teacher responsibilities are material organization, creating work areas, time constraints, task transitions (Cohen & deBettencourt, 1983). Teachers can convey directions by establishing and using a system of picture directions, audio recording directions, distilling the wording of directions, highlighting the keywords of directions (e.g. by underlining), varying the response format around student difficulties, and making the directions clear. Teachers need to teach students how to approach any task in a systematic way. By taking a few minutes to make a plan, students can reduce the amount of time that may otherwise be wasted (Cohen & deBettencourt, 1983).

Other issues include teaching students to seek and find help when they encounter questions, either by signing up for a teacher-pupil conference or finding a peer tutor. When working independently, students need methods of checking their work. Provide ways for students to get that feedback by self-correction, including flashcards and overlays, where a master of correct answers on a transparency can be laid over the student's worksheet to indicate alignment. An independent learner should also have resources to track his or her progress. Being able to commend one's own work reduces the need for external recognition from the teacher and also helps the student to be independent for this area of learning. Private self-progress charts or other systems can promote this aspect of independence (Cohen & deBettencourt, 1983).

### **Transitions in Action**

Arlin (1979) offers that structured transitions can reduce off-task behaviors that can help the smoothness of transitions. A teacher can spend the first few weeks of school teaching students how he or she wants a regular transition such as preparing for lunch or library to flow. After some practice, the students will know what to do and will not require explicit instructions for every regular transition. Linda Karamatic, a second grade teacher I interviewed and observed, shared with me that much of September was devoted to learning the routines each year. She told me that after the winter break, it had taken at least a week or more of explicit reminders for her students to get back into the routine (L. Karamatic, personal communication, January 17, 2008). Having a regular routine makes it possible to say something as simple as "test spots," which students know means to sit independent of classmates. Karamatic quickly reviewed what that meant at tables, on the rug area, or any other area of the classroom (L. Karamatic, personal communication, January 17, 2008).

Arlin (1979) also notes that for irregular, special activities, explicit instructions in a structured transition can reduce off-task behaviors. Webber (1988) concurs that explicit instructions are necessary for non-routine activities. She goes a bit farther to promote that teachers should have students repeat the given directions before proceeding to the next activity to check for understanding (Webber, 1988). I saw this in use in both Karamatic's class and two other classroom observations. In one of the other classrooms, the teacher had the students recap his directions, which included three options that I saw as an opportunity to develop each student's autonomy for his or her learning—at least they were given guided choices in what activity to pursue (P. Rocks, personal communication, February 1, 2008).

In addition to having structured transitions, my research and experience stresses that it is vitally important to set aside enough time to make transitions. Transitions cannot be sped through very easily. This is another reason why planning and structuring transitions is important.

### **Overview of Transitions Techniques**

Which transitions to use is a choice that each teacher will have to make for him- or herself. But I'll summarize some techniques that I've gathered in my research.

#### *Music and Other Sounds*

Music is an easy way to get everyone's attention in the classroom. In Karamatic's class, she used a recording of a Louis Armstrong song that was familiar to the class; they had developed a routine of hand gestures to go along with the lyrics. She played it as the students were wrapping up their writers workshop for the day. It was a signal for all of the students to come to the rug (L. Karamatic, personal communication, January 17, 2008). Another idea is

using one song in the morning. As the students enter, they'll hear what will become a familiar song, and they'll be able to anticipate its and the morning routine's end.

Recordings can be helpful, but less formal songs can be useful and having a collection can make using music in the classroom flexible. Other auditory signals such as a bell or chimes can provide an alert to students when necessary; a wind chime can provide a less jarring sound than a standard bell, but they essentially function the same way (Feldman, 2000). Counting down from five should work like these other mechanical sounds.

### *Games & Movement*

A physical activity can provide a distinct break from one activity to the next. A game of Simon Says can provide an opportunity for students to move and use some bottled up energy (L. Karamatic, personal communication, January 17, 2008). In my observation, this familiar game was followed with a camp song. Together these activities consumed about five minutes. While this may seem like a significant amount of time, every one of the students was alert and ready to move on to the next activity of the day. There are a multitude of games that can be incorporated into a class schedule, refer to Feldman (2000) for many ideas.

### **Conclusion**

After this research, I can see that my troubles were the result of unstructured transitions that were full of Kounin's (1977) ideas of overlapping, fragmentation, and flip-flops and occasionally the other issues of jerkiness and slowdowns. By trying to stay in control, I was committing a disservice to both my own sanity and my students by underestimating their capacities for taking some responsibility for the many transitions throughout the day. I am not trying to absolve myself from any responsibility, but I think helping students to be interested in and responsible for their own learning has only long-term benefits.

Cohen and deBettencourt (1983) offer many ideas for guiding students, even pre-reading primary students, to become more independent learners. Their step-by-step strategy covers teaching students to analyze a plan of attack for any task they face before delving into the project. Having this very mature ability can be useful for my students throughout their schooling experiences. I consider that learning this during their early elementary years can only be an advantage to my future students.

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## Tips for Successful Groupwork Design

Seth Vanzant

Why are my groupwork activities not working; what skills do my students need to be respectful, responsible, and productive group members; how will they learn these skills? These were some of the questions that I had during my first student teaching experience, and are the essential foci of this paper. As Judith Shuman states, “Educators found that before students can work in groups successfully, skills for cooperation and collaboration need to be taught explicitly and practiced consistently before they become internalized, routine behaviors” (Shulman, 1995). This paper will look at some of the problems that persist with groupwork, and spotlight strategies that teachers can use to design groupwork activities and better prepare students for collaboration.

My interest in this topic developed during my fall student teaching experience in the third grade. The school’s science curriculum required students to work in groups, emphasizing inquiry and collaboration. I took time to define group roles, procedures, and expectations, but I still found that the majority of my group activities resulted in “not sharing” and other off-task behaviors. At the time, I was questioning whether or not my students were capable, or mature enough to work in this setting. In the end, I realized that my groupwork activities failed as a result of improper planning and preparation. My students were capable; they just needed time to acquire new skills.

Preparing this project has helped me see the bigger picture in regards to groupwork preparation. My sources for this paper include: Elizabeth Cohen’s book *“Designing Groupwork,”* Judith Schulman’s “Groupwork in Diverse Classrooms: A Casebook for Educators {and} Facilitators Guide,” and interviews and observations with teachers at Lincoln and Griffin Elementary schools in Olympia, WA. At first, my aim was to discover how teachers prepared students for groupwork activities. Proceeding in my research, I found that this topic had much broader implications, namely, preparing students to work in groups requires building classroom community. Social dynamics can vary, and interpersonal conflict and status can be detrimental to any well planned group activity.

Elizabeth Cohen’s book *“Designing Groupwork: Strategies for the Heterogeneous Classroom”* was my starting off point. This book defines the obstacles associated with groupwork, and presents effective strategies for designing collaborative group activities. During my reading of this book, I discovered that the leading problem associated with “failed” group activities had to do with status conflict. Cohen presents a clear analysis of how status ordering develops, and how it can influence group interactions.

### **What Is Status Conflict, And How Does This Contribute To Unproductive Groupwork?**

As Cohen explains, “Small task groups tend to develop hierarchies where some members are more active and influential than others” (1994, p. 27). Academic, peer, and societal statuses have a major influence on classroom relations and group interactions. For example, students who are perceived as academically high in math have the potential of dominating groupwork activities in math. Conversely, group members of lower academic standing may appeal to the authority of the “high-status” student and become passive group members. Additionally, children create their own peer statuses on the playground and in their neighborhoods. This consists of popularity, appearance, and overall social standing among peers, and creates high

status issues in the classroom which can sometimes lead to interpersonal conflicts. Societal status consists of socio-cultural characteristics such as, economic status, ethnicity, and sex (Cohen, 1994).

### **How Can Teachers Group Students to Help Minimize Status Problems?**

There are two considerations for grouping students, specifically, group size and heterogeneity. The size of the group has a major influence on access and participation. For example, a triad group has the potential of creating a partnership among two students, excluding the third member (Cohen, 1994). On the other hand, groups that are larger than five can be hard to access. Cohen affirms that, “As the group gets larger there is more of a chance that one or more members will be left out of the interaction almost entirely” (1994, p. 73). The research states that four and five students per group is the most efficient group size (Cohen, 1994; Shulman, 1995). Groups should be composed of mixed student ability and status characteristics. Teachers who are aware of status problems that exist among students can strategically assign students to groups to help alleviate potential conflict. Additionally, teachers can group challenged students with more competent peers to help with academics and behavioral concerns (Cohen, 1994).

Overall, social hierarchies and status conflict in the classroom can create unwanted attitudes and behaviors that can diminish group harmony. Therefore, the big question is: how do teachers minimize status conflict? My observations and interviews were conducted at Lincoln Elementary (second and third grade) and Griffin Elementary (second grade). Visiting with teachers from these schools revealed that class-meetings, role-play, and team-building activities are great ways to reinforce classroom community and remedy status problems.

### **How Can Class-Meetings Be Used to Foster a Community of Learners?**

My observations at Lincoln Elementary exemplify how meetings can be used to establish the same skills that students need for groupwork. As Cohen explains, students “must learn to ask for other people’s opinions, to give other people a chance to talk, and to make brief, sensible contributions to the group effort” (1994, p. 40). Class-meetings provide these types of interactions in a safe and welcoming environment. Morning meeting at Lincoln began with a greeting. Students took turns greeting their neighbors and shaking hands. Following this, students took turns asking questions and sharing personal experiences and current life events. My conversation with Paul Rocks revealed that meetings were used to bring everyone together for reflections, questions, and concerns, yet provided time for students to share their strengths, talents, and personal interests with their classmates (Rocks, 2008). In short, class-meetings help create an environment of acceptance and belonging, which can then be carried over to other classroom realms, such as groupwork.

### **How Do Role-Play and Team-Building Activities Help Reinforce Group Norms?**

At Griffin Elementary, second grade teacher, Geri Moore emphasized role-play as a strategy for teaching self management, cooperative behaviors, and other group norms (2008). Her group norms consisted of: A) always try, B) be responsible, C) cooperate with others, D) do your best, and E) treat everyone with respect; these were posted on the classroom walls for referencing. Geri mentioned that when she is introducing an activity that requires cooperation, she will define that behavior, refer to the classroom rules, and role-play the scenario with her team teacher. Geri then has students reenact the scenario with their neighbors. She believes that it is counterproductive to have students role-play the undesired behavior (i.e. what not to do), in

other words, teachers should have students role-play the desired behavior only. However, she did think that it was okay for teachers to model the undesired behavior with a follow-up discussion about why it was not accepted and how it could be improved. Moreover, role-play activities can enhance new skills, such as conflict resolution, cooperation, active listening, questioning strategies, and discussion strategies (Moore, 2008).

In accordance with class-meetings and role-playing exercises, cooperative team building games are a great way of engaging students in the collaborative process, while reinforcing the importance of working together as a team. Cohen affirms that, “norms and skills are best taught through exercises and games, referred to as ‘skillbuilders.’ People rarely learn new behaviors or convictions about how one ought to behave through lectures or general discussion alone” (Cohen, 1994). These types of activities should be the first groupwork activities that students do. Cooperative games/activities can be used to reinforce problem solving skills, such as interconnection, active listening, and trust (Pollack, 2005). Skillbuilding activities require post reflections and discussions about the new skills and why they are important (Cohen, 1994). As Cohen explains, teachers should develop skillbuilding activities that meet the five social learning principals as outlined by Albert Bandura. These principals include:

1. New behaviors must be labeled and discussed.
2. Students must learn to recognize when new behaviors occur.
3. Students must be able to use labels and discuss behaviors in an objective way.
4. Students must have a chance to practice new behaviors.
5. New behaviors should be reinforced when they occur (Cohen, 1994, p. 48).

Through my research I have discovered an abundance of team building activities that teachers use to build classroom community and prepare students for groupwork. It is suggested that teachers develop a repertoire of cooperative games that can be developed into daily classroom practices (Shulman, 1995). Rich Sikorski, a music teacher at Lincoln Elementary mentioned how he incorporates team building games into his daily routine. He described a game that he likes to have students play called, “Through the Hoop.” This game emphasizes working together, where each member of the group plays an important role in solving the problem. The game requires students to stand in a circle, holding hands. The teacher puts a large Hoola Hoop on one person’s arm, and explains that each member of the group must pass through the hoop without letting go of their neighbor’s hand; the hoop must travel all the way around the circle. This activity leaves room for creativity and supports the notion that a group functions best when everyone is listening to and supporting each other (Sikorski, 2008). (For more team building exercises, see the appendix of this paper.)

Sometimes groupwork fails not because of status conflict, but simply because the activity is not properly designed. Before groupwork can function correctly, the teacher needs to identify the type of group activity and the expected amount of student interaction. Cohen identifies two engagement levels for group activities, routine and conceptual (1994). Routine objectives typically consist of problems with one right answer, and tend to have limited amounts of student interaction (e.g. peer tutoring). On the other hand, conceptual objectives are more open to multiple perspectives and always have more than one right answer; these types of activities promote higher leveled thinking and interactions among peers. Cohen refers to these types of activities as “true group” tasks, that is, an activity that requires multiple abilities (1994). For example, Cohen states that “If one person can do the task alone, then there is no motivation for a free exchange of ideas, but the only issue is whether the person who knows how to do the job

will help those who don't" (1994, p. 64). In congruence, Judith Shulman defines well crafted groupwork activities as:

- 1) open-endedness of the final product or solution; as well as the process of getting to that product,
- 2) the use of many different intellectual dimensions for successful completion of the task,
- 3) positive interdependence and individual accountability embedded in the task, and
- 4) an underlying 'big idea,' a central disciplinary concept, or important subject matter content. (1995, p. vii).

Overall, a well crafted groupwork activity that requires multiple abilities will provide more opportunities for students to demonstrate their talents and is simply more engaging for all.

### **How Does Accountability Contribute to Group Dynamics?**

From my research, I have found that accountability poses many questions. As Schulman illustrates, activities where students have the same goal tend to develop "free rider" problems, where some students wait until somebody in the group does all the work and then copies the answers (1995). This was a predominant problem during my own experiences with groupwork, and is a dilemma for many teachers. Cohen suggests that the solution to accountability is to hold both the individual and the group accountable. Individual accountability can consist of work completed during the group assignment, or after the activity; the latter strategy helps eliminate "free riding" and is a more useful way of achieving individual accountability (Shulman, 1995). It is implied that holding the group accountable helps motivate students to participate in the group process. For example, Cohen states, "Students care about making a strong presentation to the class. They don't want to look foolish and unprepared" (1994, p. 67). Furthermore, expectations regarding accountability need to be made clear to students prior to starting the group task.

### **How Do You Grade Groupwork?**

One troublesome component to accountability is grading and assessment. The research suggests that assigning a grade to the group creates status problems. For instance, Cohen states that "If one group member is felt to be incompetent at the task, the group is likely to forbid him or her to have any part in the product" (1994, p. 82). This implies that it is preferable to not assign grades to group projects, but rather provide verbal or written feedback to the group. Further, Cohen (1994) and Schulman (1995) both emphasize not evaluating students on their individual performances in groups. As previously noted, status conflict can often prevent some students from attaining access to the activity, which results in passive and disengaged behaviors. Ultimately, it is unfair to penalize students for not participating when there are other variables that hinder access to the group.

### **How Do You Introduce and Wrap Up Group Activities?**

Prior to beginning the groupwork assignment, students need to have a clear understanding of what is expected of them during the activity. Cohen (1994) illustrates the importance of introducing the activity's central concepts or big ideas; this might include a discussion or a demonstration that doesn't reveal too much of the activity (i.e. you want students to do the discovering). Before beginning, it is also a good idea to take the time to reemphasize group norms, employ team-building games, and recognize that no one student will have the

ability to complete the task alone, but everyone will have some of the skills to complete it successfully (hopefully you've chosen a conceptual objective for your group activity).

Additionally, teachers can contribute to successful groupwork by providing clear and concise written instructions. Supplying students with written instructions allows students to discuss the activity's objectives and procedures. It is suggested that instructions need to be free of extraneous details, yet thorough enough so students can operate without the teacher's assistance. Additionally, Cohen emphasizes that only two copies of the instructions should be given to each group, she explains that, "if there is one [set of instructions] for everyone, students will try to read silently and there will be no discussion" (1994, p. 73). Providing students with clear instructions promotes interdependence among group members and helps alleviate unnecessary questions.

Following every group activity there should be time allocated to reporting group findings. This can be in the form of a whole class discussions and/or presentations from each group. Having groups report back allows students to see how other groups completed the task, or if each group has a different task, to learn about what other groups did. During group conclusions, the teacher should emphasize active listening and respect for the presenters. Wrap-up discussions are great ways of further engaging students in the groupwork objectives. These discussions can generate additional questions that can help clarify any confusion that may still exist. Moreover, wrapping-up group projects should also leave time for students to reflect on the group process (Cohen, 1994; Moore, 2008).

Through this project I have learned that there are many facets to groupwork preparation. I have found that the most important aspect to designing groupwork is building a respectful and safe classroom community. Status problems exist! Therefore, it is up to the teacher to design activities that help foster community minded students in aim to alleviate potential status problems during group tasks. As noted in this paper, class-meetings, role-play, and team building activities (see appendix for more thoughts on team building activities) can be used to help reinforce group norms, such as, active listening, cooperation, and respect. Further, a well crafted groupwork activity should include: clear expectations and instructions; individual and group accountability; an orientation activity; heterogeneous groupings (4-5 students per group); multiple ability task (i.e. conceptual objective). Furthermore, this project has provided a

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## Appendix of Team Building Activities

### Appendix of Team Building Activities

Here are a few team-building activities. Note: Elizabeth Cohen's book *Designing Groupwork: Strategies for the Heterogeneous Classroom*, provides several other examples for building classroom community. Additionally, Stanley Pollack's book *Moving Beyond Icebreakers: An Innovative Approach to Group Facilitation, Learning, and Action*, is a great resource for discovering various team-building activities.

#### **Broken Circles** (Cohen, 1994)

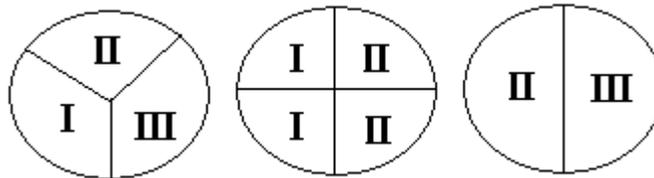
Goals: Giving; working together

Time: 10-15 minutes

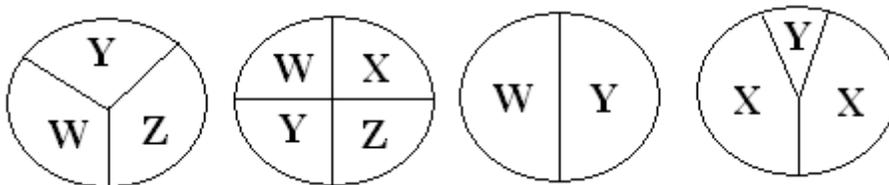
Physical Contact: None

Challenges: No talking or gesturing

#### **Easy**



#### **Medium**



#### **Preparation**

- Cut and label circles
- Sort circle pieces into envelopes (i.e. W, Y, Z, X or I, II, II)
- Give each student an envelope.

#### **Instructions**

- This exercise must be played in complete silence. No talking.
- You cannot point or signal to other players with your hands in any way.
- Each player must put together his or her own circle. No one else may show a player how to do it or do it for him or her
- This is an exercise in giving. You may not take a piece from another player, but you may give your pieces, one at a time, to any other members of your group. You may not place a piece in another person's puzzle; players must complete their own puzzles. Instead, hand the piece to the other player, or place it beside the other pieces in front of him or her. (Cohen, 1994, p. 163)

### **Follow Up Discussion Questions**

- What do you think this game was all about?
- How do you feel about what happened in your group today?
- What things did you do in your group that helped you to be successful in solving the problem?
- What things did you do that made it harder?
- What could the groups do better in the future? (Cohen, 1994)

### **Bag Toss (Handshake Alternative)** (Pollack, 2005)

Goals: Interconnection, focus, communication

Time: 10 minutes

Physical contact: Minimal

Physical challenges: Must be able to throw and catch a bean bag.

Number of participants: 12-30

Space Required: Open floor space

Materials: Between 5 and 15 bean bags, depending on the size of the group

Preparation: None

### **Instructions**

- Have students stand in a circle
- To begin, establish an order for throwing the beanbags
  - With handshakes or bean bags, the facilitator (person A) calls the name of someone across the circle (person B), makes eye contact with that person, then either walks across and shakes his or her hand or throws the bean bag to that person. Person B repeats this process with a different student; the process continues until everyone has been greeted.
- Once the pattern is established, begin by calling someone's name and throwing the bean bag underhand to that person. Tell the group to throw underhand throughout the game.
- While the first bean bag makes its way around the group, tell the group that you are going to start adding more bean bags. Remind them that it is important to continue calling names.
- Introduce more bean bags. Note: when someone drops a bean bag, they simply pick up the bag and continue.
- When you are ready to end this activity, hold the bean bags as they come back to you.

### **Processing Suggestions**

- Use this exercise to demonstrate the various ways in which everyone is connected, both giving to and receiving from each other.
- You can also talk about the importance of names and eye contact. Did anyone stop calling out a name? What happened?
- People often find ways to adapt to the circumstances, giving cues to each other or helping each other out. What strategies did people use to focus on catching and throwing the bags? How do these relate to the strategies people use in their lives?
- In this exercise, and in the work of the group, everyone needs to maintain focus if the group is going to "keep all its bags in the air." When many bags are used, the exercise

can be used as a metaphor for how people react when conditions feel overwhelming.  
How did people cope?

- BAG TOSS also shows the importance of establishing a clear structure, and how much fun and how productive working within a structure can be.
- Was the group functional or dysfunctional, and were you as an individual contributing to the order or contributing to the chaos? We each have power over the function of the group. (Pollack, 2005, p. 302 & 303)

### **Triple Draw** (Pollack, 2005, p. 251)

Goals: Group problem solving, Creativity

Time: 10 Minutes (not including processing)

Physical Contact: None

Physical Challenges: Must be able to draw using a pen or marker

Number of participants: 5-15

Space Requirements: Minimal

Materials needed: For each group member a piece of paper a pen or marker, and a hard surface for writing (such as a book or a clipboard) if needed

Preparation: None

### **Instructions**

- Ideally, have the group sit in a circle or around a table. If they are at desks, establish the order for drawings to be passed on.
- Give each person a set of materials
- Each person should quickly draw a shape or scribble on their paper. Give people about ten seconds and call time.
- Each person then passes the paper to the person on their right.
- Everyone adds something to the shape or scribble on the paper they received. After about ten seconds, call time.
- Pass the papers to the right once more and allow the third person to elaborate on the drawing or turn it into something new. Give people 10-20 seconds for this.
- Collect the drawings and post them for discussion and processing.

### **Processing Suggestions**

- This exercise illustrates the benefits and challenges of working together in a group.
- It provides a direct experience of integrating other people's skills and ideas with your own and of making contributions to others.
- What changes did the original scribble go through?
- Was it difficult to watch your drawing change?
- Did it become "better" as it became more defined?
- At what stage did you feel you contributed more to the drawing? Are you better at initiating or finishing a project? (Pollack, 2005, p. 251)