



# Teacher Tip of the Week

## Transition Time: A Danger and an Opportunity

Circumstances often are more neutral than they initially appear. Typically, situations do not inherently present a danger to, or an opportunity for, learning. They take on significance as a result of the manner in which we choose to respond. Even situations that may appear to present a danger can be converted to opportunities through the plans and choices we make. Handling transition time within a class or between subjects or places offers an example of such a situation.

Transition time can be used productively to advance learning, refocus attention, and release excess energy. It can also be a time when instructional opportunities are wasted and students engage in unacceptable behavior. Transition time may be structured differently between elementary and secondary schools, but its productive uses or potential problems are equally important and just as challenging. Therefore, let us examine potential dangers presented by transition time and explore helpful strategies that can turn the dangers into opportunities to enhance classroom management and increase student learning.

First, **transition time can present problems when students are not aware that an activity is about to end.** The abrupt shift can leave students surprised and not able to finish their current activity—or not ready to begin another. The result can be confusion, frustration—even panic—and a loss of instructional time and focus. This danger can be transformed into an opportunity that a transition is coming.

With elementary students, such a signal might be staring a song on a tape or a class sing-a-long, preceded by instructions that when the song is finished, stu-

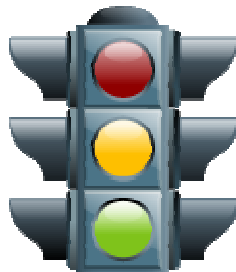
dents are to have completed their task and be ready to join the teacher for the next activity. For older students, the signal might be a bell or buzzer, or it might be cues given verbally, such as “Please finish your work in the next couple of minutes” or “Let’s take a couple more minutes before moving on.”

Second, **transition time can be difficult when students have pent-up energy as a result of the type, length, or intensity of a task.** During transition time, students may seek to release some of their energy. We can experience a loss of control and focus, leaving us frustrated due to the time lost and the need to work to regain momentum to begin the next task. To turn this danger into an opportunity,

we can give students a specific activity during the transition that includes physical movement and release of energy. Then, the danger of inappropriate behavior is curtailed. We have also retained control and the ability to draw the activity to a close smoothly.

The third danger involves students who have difficulty managing time, particularly with in-class projects. For instance, **those students who are tardy in the completion of their tasks can cause frustration for other students, worry and concern among themselves, and a loss of productive time for the entire class.** We can transform this danger into an opportunity by establishing intermediate checkpoints as students move toward completion of an activity, ensuring that no one is falling too far behind, even though students still may finish at different times.

...continued on page 2



Ideas to Share

### RECORDING COMPLIMENTS

Students earn “class compliments” when visiting another class, walking in the hallway, etc. When 10 compliments are earned, give extra recess! The class compliments are posted inside the front door. Use a cut out of your school’s mascot (or stars, etc.). (If a principal gives the class a compliment, they earn 2!)



### Helpful Website for Teachers

<http://www.sciencemadesimple.com>

Easy home and school science projects for kids, science articles, experiments, ideas, topics and instructions.



# The New Teacher Support Program

## Transition Time

(cont...)

This approach also offers the opportunity to teach students time-management skills.

The fourth danger is **the time lost as students are refocusing attention or physically moving from one location to another**. Included are the first few minutes of the next learning activity during which students have to engage in the new learning activity. The opportunity in this circumstance is to give students specific “thinking assignments” to complete during the transition. They can then be ready to respond at the new location when the necessary materials are ready. This strategy moves students efficiently through the transition, preserves instructional time, and minimizes off-task behavior.

The fifth danger associated with transition time includes **incidental noise and disruption as students move from one location to another**—thus interrupting the concentration and interfering with the learning time of others along the route. For secondary students, this danger also includes the possibility of confrontation within groups as they are making their way between classes. The associated opportunity is to use the transition time and circumstances to teach and reinforce

consideration for the rights, physical space, and privacy of others. We can help students understand behavior expectations during these times by asking them to reflect on how they feel when interrupted or disturbed.

An effective teacher understands that poorly managed transition time can mean a loss of classroom control. The result often includes discipline problems, inappropriate student behavior, and increased student frustration and conflict. It also results in the difficult task of regain student focus and the mindset for learning. That is why we must use these times as opportunities to teach and reinforce important skills for students, including time management, self-discipline, and efficient work habits.—Robert DeVruyn



**“COURAGE IS  
FEAR HOLDING  
ON A MINUTE  
LONGER.”**

—GEORGE S.  
PATTON

## MEET THE PRINCIPALS: Jill Giles

School: **W. A. Wright Elementary**

How long have you been a principal at this school? **At the beginning of this 07-08 school year, I began my 5th year as principal of W. A. Wright.**

Colleges and universities attended: **I attended Hiwassee Jr. College in Madisonville, TN. I then moved on to get my teaching degree from Belmont University. I then received my Masters in Administration from Trevecca Nazarene College.**

Special interests and hobbies: **Traveling and spending time with my family, cooking, gardening, interior design.**

Who or what inspires you each day as you do your job and why?

**My inspiration comes from having faith in God. I feel called to do what I am doing—I have great family support and very wonderful colleagues to work and laugh with. I have to keep in mind on a daily basis that these children need to feel safe and loved; then they will learn. If I can touch the life of even one child in a positive way it has all been worth the challenges I face.**

If you had not gone into education, what type of job would you have chosen: **That is a tough question—I always knew I wanted to be a teacher. I would play school with my friends and dolls as a little girl. I also loved to play house with my granny and mom. I really love interior design—that would be my pick as a second career.**

What is the favorite part of your job: **Seeing children grow and mature both academically and emotionally. It is so rewarding when a student discovers they can read! I also enjoy making children feel special. It is great to have the opportunity to praise and brag on students doing a good job—they really light up with smiles and pride when they realize they have accomplished something (even if it is a baby step).**



# Handling conflict with colleagues



When you have a conflict with a colleague, don't fret and stew. Rather, as soon as possible, go directly to the person with whom the conflict exists, with the intent of working the conflict through together. If you ignore or avoid the person and the conflict, you may

put your relationship and your ability to work together at a high risk. Certainly, you do not have to agree on everything as you work things out—but you must agree to work together. You must agree to keep the areas of conflict in perspective and not allow the situation to diminish or destroy the ability to work together successfully again. Without this stance, your future ability to work together will be impaired—and everyone will know it.

### EIGHT STEPS FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION

1. "Know Thyself" and Take Care of Self
2. Clarify Personal Needs Threatened by the Dispute
3. Identify a Safe Place for Negotiation
4. Take a Listening Stance into the Interaction
5. Assert Your Needs Clearly and Specifically
6. Approach Problem-Solving with Flexibility
7. Manage Impasse with Calm, Patience, and Respect
8. Build an Agreement that Works

## ADVICE AND SUPPORT FROM THE VETERANS

GRACE PACK

MATH TEACHER/  
LEBANON HIGH SCHOOL



This is a simple rule I have—you cannot teach sitting behind a desk. You need to be up and moving around your classroom – teaching and involving students in the lesson.

# New Teacher Support Group Participants



JOHN MCGEE  
MT. JULIET HIGH SCHOOL  
ENGLISH I/  
READING



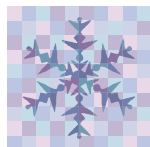
DIANE VANIMAN  
MT. JULIET MIDDLE SCHOOL  
7TH GRADE MATH

### WHY DID YOU BECOME A TEACHER?

*"When I was in high school, I had a teacher/coach that positively impacted my life during a rough time. I became a teacher to follow in his footsteps; to become a role model and positively impact students' lives."*—John McGee

### WHY DID YOU BECOME A TEACHER?

*"I wanted to help students like my son who may not have the "at home" influences that he had. Making the difference in the life of a child."*—Diane Vaniman



## Did You Know?

More than five billion crayons are produced per year

More than 100 billion crayons have been produced so far. The first crayons consisted of a mixture of charcoal and oil. In the early 1900s, cousins Edwin Binney and Harold Smith developed a non-toxic wax crayon. Binney's wife, Alice, attached the French word for chalk, *craie*, with "ola," from oily, to form the Crayola name. Their first box of Crayola crayons were sold for a nickel in 1903.

The first Crayola crayons came in a box of eight colors: black, blue, brown, green, orange, purple, red and yellow. By 1957, 40 new colours were introduced. Today there are more than 120 crayon colors, including Atomic Tangerine, Blizzard Blue, Mango Tango, Outrageous Orange, Laser Lemon, Screamin' Green and Shocking Pink. Over 5 billion crayons are produced each year.



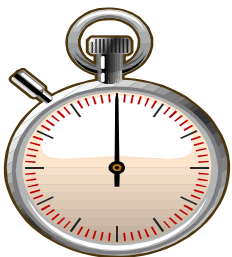
## GOOD TEACHING: THE TOP TEN REQUIREMENTS

This is very important -- good teaching is about humor. It's about being self-deprecating and not taking yourself too seriously. It's often about making innocuous jokes, mostly at your own expense, so that the ice breaks and students learn in a more relaxed atmosphere where you, like them, are human with your own share of faults and shortcomings.

### Time Management Tips for Teachers

#### ORGANIZING THE CLASSROOM

- For bulletin board paper, use a straight edge razor blade and mount the paper like you would wallpaper. It is faster and more even than using scissors.
- Arrange your classroom so that pathways are kept open and furniture does not hinder movement by you, your students, and mobile equipment such as overhead projectors.



- Cover bulletin boards with fadeless bulletin board paper in a color that can last several months before it needs changing. For example, dark blue is good for October through January. In October you can decorate it with moons, pumpkins, owls, or silhouettes—along with appropriate class work. A theme for November could be a cornucopia, and for December, snowflakes.

Continued next week.....

### Need a Laugh?



"The tip off was your reference to Gregory Peck's obsession with the Great White Whale."

It is the policy of the Wilson County School System not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, or disability in its educational programs or employment policies as required by Titles VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Equal Pay Act of 1973, and the Americans with Disabilities Act.