



# Teacher Tip of the Week

## New Teacher Support Program 2008-2009

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Teacher Tip of the Week  
New Teacher Support  
Program  
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### HELPFUL WEBSITE FOR TEACHERS



<http://panoramas.dk/US/index.html>

Panoramas.dk is a wonderful web site that offers 360° interactive photographs of cities and attractions all over the world.



### Cutting Corners

#### THE "BUG" LIST

"There are many students who will never make the honor roll list, but they do try hard and show improvements from grading period to grading period. I now post the "BUG List" which is an acronym for "I Brought Up My Grade." This list is posted along with the honor roll list to encourage effort. I also put a sticker of a bug on their report card or progress report. They love it, and it really seems to encourage those students who try so hard."

## Student Disinterest: Is it Curable?

*What happens when students "check out" of the learning process? Is it an educator's job to re-engage them? If so, how can that be accomplished?*

Disinterested students -- they are easy to spot! They meander into class, drop their books, and slide into semi-reclining positions at their desks. Indifference is written all over their faces -- and all over the work they do.

Meanwhile, teachers scratch their heads and huddle together, trying to make sense of the lack of pride and drive those students show. We wonder if motivation can be taught and we speculate on whether inspiring students is really part of our jobs.

All of us secretly hope that a tonic will be discovered to fix what ails those students; and we pray (outside of school, of course) that the disease is not contagious.

Students check out of the learning process for a variety of reasons -- including poor self-esteem, being under- or over-challenged by the curriculum, turmoil at home, boredom, or illness. Most educators, however, are always seeking concrete ways to re-engage those disinterested students in the learning process.

### Turn Their Weaknesses Into Strengths

•Work with what you've got. Middle-schoolers flourish in herds -- it's the nature of the beast. Group projects and an abundance of lunch-hour and after-school clubs will meet those students' need to be part of a group.

•Create projects that tap into their innate desire to make a difference in

their world. Check out the a few of the many [Service Learning Web Resources](#) available or connect learning themes to such social justice topics as famine, child labor, and children's rights.

•This generation loves to interact. Capitalize on that by integrating instant messaging (MSN) and online bulletin boards into your assignments. They'll be so busy writing that they won't even realize they're learning!

### Engage Students in Participation

•Enlist students' opinions whenever possible. Involve them in the creation of assignment rubrics.

Frequently seek their feedback concerning what is happening in your classroom.

•Provide plenty of opportunities for student choice in the way they learn and in the ways they are allowed to demonstrate what they know. That will encourage them to take more ownership of their learning.

### Reward Them!

•Create a bulletin board headlined "Great Moments in Room \_\_\_." If you see a student doing something thoughtful or kind, write it down on an index card and hang it up on the board.

•Create a bulletin board that shouts "Stupendous Students." Let students choose the work they are most proud of to display.

(continued on page 2)



## Student Disinterest: Is it Curable? (continued from page 1)

### Make Sure Structures Are in Place

- Communicate clear, reachable expectations. Routinely provide benchmarks and rubrics at the beginning of an assignment, so students know what they have to do to achieve.
- Do whatever you have to do to help students meet your learning expectations for them. If reading 100 minutes a week at home is a turn-off for a disinterested student, start with 50 minutes and work up gradually. Students will

be encouraged to make an effort if they know you are willing to work with them.

### Meet Their Emotional Needs

- Consider publishing student work online. Nothing seems to motivate students quite as much as knowing their work will have an extended audience.
- Encourage administrators to make a special effort to work with troublesome students. They can offer extra love and support, a sincere "How are you doing?" in the morning, an extra hug when they need a time out, maybe even a trip to McDonald's at the end of a successful week.

•Ensure that learning is meaningful to the student. Whenever possible, make connections between the curriculum and their lives. Doing so will enhance their interest and make the learning (and teaching) easier.

•Teacher energy and enthusiasm can be significant to getting disinterested students engaged in learning. Nothing is quite as captivating as a teacher who is continually on the brink of new learning discoveries -- students can't help being enticed to jump on board for the learning ride ahead! —*Brenda Dyck/Education World*



**“Teachers perform major miracles in America, daily.”**

**-- Meryl Streep**

## Value placed on school recess activities

As schools devote more time to tests and basic subjects and add programs to combat social problems, every hour of the day becomes more precious. One way some schools have sought to find more time is by shortening—or sacrificing—recess.

But a recent study of elementary and middle school principals found that most educators believe the school day recess break is healthy and

productive for young children. Principals who were surveyed said children who participate in recess are more alert and more relaxed later.



The survey, conducted by the National Association of Elementary School Principals, also found that children who have recess may learn better than children who do not have it.

“Play is the way children learn social and personal skills that are difficult to teach any other way,”

## THANK A TEACHER



### Todd English Celebrity Chef

History teacher and Little League coach Fred Black at the Galloway School in Atlanta, GA. Their relationship turned into a lifelong friendship that exists to this day.

“At the time, I was nine or 10, my parents were going through a divorce, and I was having a rough time at home, but he was there for me as a mentor. He kept me straight,” says English, who now owns Olives, Figs, and Bonfire, among other restaurants.

“He was a go-getter, a happy guy, always enthusiastic about everything,” English remembers. “He taught me to keep the enthusiasm of life and not to get down about situations. He taught me to live life to the fullest.” —Todd English

says Samuel Sava of NAESP. “Young children need recess, and schools need to make time for them to release their energies, relax, and get a break from academics.”

The survey also found many principals believe teachers should be trained in recess supervision, but few receive such training.—*Better Teaching*

## New Teacher Support Participants:



**Jackie Wix**  
Mt. Juliet  
Elementary  
1st grade

### WHY DID YOU BECOME A TEACHER?

*“My mother has been a teacher since I was about three years old. I have grown up around teachers. I have watched teachers, and wanted to be a teacher for as long as I can remember. I didn’t really know what was driving me to want to be a teacher until I was in college. I saw students who wanted to learn, who needed to learn, and who struggled to learn. I remembered days when I thought I just couldn’t get through to some kids in my practicum classes. However, I remember the feeling of excitement when one student had that “light bulb moment.” from then on I knew I was meant to be a teacher. I want to shape our future generation to be responsible, well rounded, adults. I want to give each student a fighting chance in this world because it can be very unforgiving. I want to give these students what I needed from my teachers as a child. I want to show these students I am interested in them and their lives, and I want them to know I am their biggest cheerleader. That is why I am a teacher.”—Jackie Wix*



**Wayne Easterling**  
Mt. Juliet Middle  
School  
Math

### WHY DID YOU BECOME A TEACHER?

*“I enjoy working with kids and I have a lot of experience from federal service as a scientist that I would like to pass on.”—Wayne Easterling*



## From the Bookshelf:



**Intelligence and How to Get It : Why Schools and Cultures Count**  
by Richard E. Nisbett

Whether intelligence is largely determined by genetics or environment has long been hotly contested. Nisbett, a University of Michigan psychology professor, weighs in forcefully and articulately, claiming that environmental conditions almost completely overwhelm the impact of genes. He comes to this conclusion through a careful statistical analysis of a large number of studies and also demonstrates how environment can influence not only IQ measures but actual achievement of both students and adults. (People often “overachieve” when appropriate incentives are in place, Nisbett argues.)

Nisbett builds a very strong case that measured IQ differences across racial, cultural and socioeconomic boundaries can easily be explained without resorting to hereditary factors. The result is a very positive message: schools, parents and government programs can have a huge impact if they take the right, which are not necessarily the most expensive, steps. Without those steps, he says, the current role of socioeconomic factors is frightening, with economically disadvantaged children largely condemned to failure. Although Nisbett relies heavily on statistics to document his claims, he does so in a manner accessible to general readers and uses a thoroughly appealing style to engage them throughout.



## Vanishing School Supplies

If you’ve found that students constantly lose their school supplies, collect the extras at the beginning of the school year and store them along with the materials you purchased and/or your school provided.

Keep everything in clearly-labeled containers on a shelf you can access easily. Once a month, pass out supplies to students who have run out of or misplaced their materials and send notes home to parents asking for replacements.





# Master Teacher Tips...

## Staff Relationships

There may, indeed, be many times when you feel like a martyr. Make no mistake: there is nothing wrong with the feeling. But it is always a mistake to act like a martyr with your colleagues. A close look will reveal that the behavior not only ends up lowering your self-esteem; it also annoys those around you. As a result, you will probably function in a state of isolation from your colleagues if you play the role. Therefore, have the feeling, but avoid acting it out, and your personal feelings won't damage staff relations.

The first time you take special liberties with school policy, no one may notice, say anything, or do anything. But if it becomes a habit, three responses from your colleagues are probable. First, they will resent you and your actions. Second, your colleagues may also think you are both dishonest and unfair. Third, others will think that you do not intend to fulfill your responsibilities and are not very conscientious or very professional. With all three of these colleague opinions, you lose—and, unfortunately, there are no winners. Therefore, it is best to learn school policy and follow it—if you want people to trust you.



## Upcoming Events

National Youth Sports Safety Month

Southern Belles Month

Week of the Young Child  
April 19-25

National Volunteer Week  
April 19-25

National Jelly Bean Day April 22

DNA Day April 25

## For a Laugh!

MCHUMOR.COM by T. McCracken



"The superintendent is saving money by training driver's ed students in school buses."

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