



# Teacher Tip of the Week

## New Teacher Support Program 2008-2009

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



[www.OneLook.com](http://www.OneLook.com)

Search many dictionaries from one place. Includes a unique 'Reverse Dictionary'; type in a definition and they suggest the word.



### Cutting Corners

#### BATTER UP:

My jobs and discipline follow the theme of baseball. I made a large poster of a baseball diamond with all of the positions labeled on it. (You can add coaches and umpires off to the side if you need to). Each position has a specific classroom job and I rotate jobs every one-two weeks. I separate my class into two or three groups and pick names out of a "dugout" and the students choose what job they want for the next two weeks. I learned not to let them pass on a job if the one they really want is already taken (it takes too long).—*Teacher Tips*

## Building Good Teacher/Parent Relationships

Building good teacher-parent relationships is the foundation for a partnership we so desperately need in the schools. Parents and teachers must work together to promote the welfare of the child involved. Good communication skills between both parties can eliminate problems in the future. Preparation for parent-teacher conferences can help to address student successes and failures.

Teachers often say the parents who need to confer with school personnel are least likely to do so.

Here are some ways you can build trust with parents who— for whatever reasons— have chosen not to meet the teachers.

- ◆ **PREPARE STUDENTS FOR PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES.** If students are uneasy about parent conferences, the parents probably are, too. Put students at ease by communicating a friendly, eager attitude toward meeting parents.
- ◆ **INITIATE CONTACT WITH PARENTS.** Parents prefer direct contact with teachers over other forms of home-school communications. Teachers can use written notes or telephone conversations to praise the child's academic achievements, social skills, behavior or special talents.
- ◆ **INVITE PARENTS TO VISIT THE SCHOOL.** Parents can benefit from coming to school for reasons such as lunch with the children, to attend a play or to review art work or projects.
- ◆ **PLAN THE SEATING ARRANGEMENT.** The most successful conferences occur when teacher and parents are seated face to face on the same side of the table. This creates an open, warm



atmosphere and a feeling of cooperative decision making.

- ◆ **PREPARE A GENERAL OUTLINE.** Four basic parts of every conference are an introductory conversation that establishes rapport; a discussion of positive attributes of the child; a presentation of the students' work to highlight strengths and progress; and a discussion of areas where the parents and teacher can work together.

### HELPING SINGLE PARENTS

In some schools as many as 90% of the children are from single-parent families. In others the statistics may be smaller, but according to the Census Bureau, nearly 20% of the nation's children will live part of their school-age life with a single parent.

Principals and teachers need to work together to build recognition of this into all school activities.

- ◆ Hold a teacher training session on working with single parents. Many staff members are themselves single parents, and can share some of their concerns and problems.
- ◆ Be extremely sensitive to the use of the terms "broken home," "fractured family" and "diminished family" which produce a stereotyped attitude about the special children involved.
- ◆ Be aware of the work time of single parents in scheduling meetings, conferences and activities.
- ◆ Provide space on school forms for names and addresses of both parents, and for names of blended family members if the parents remarry. Provide duplicate sets of school materials if requested.

## History in the Making: Teaching about 9/11



With a focus on the events of September 11, 2001, these lesson plans and activities teach the value of primary sources as a means to remembering people, events, and recent history.

### OBJECTIVE

Created by the National September 11 Memorial & Museum, in conjunction

with Scholastic Inc., *History in the Making* features national standards-based lessons and activities to help students

think critically about:

- how current events become part of history how the past affects our lives—as individuals, as members of a local community, and as citizens of the world

*What students should know:*

- The events of September 11 were witnessed by a global audience in real time. As a result, there is an abundance of primary source material—first-person testimonies, objects, and digital materials—for scholars and future generations interested in learning about this event.

- Different people may describe or remember the events of September 11, 2001, in different ways.

- Artifacts—from building remnants to personal

belongings—provide concrete evidence of past events.

It is important for artifacts to be preserved by archivists and museum curators so that historians and future generations may study and learn about the past.

### WEBSITE FOR LESSON PLANS ON 9/11

<http://www2.scholastic.com/browse/lessonplan.jsp?id=781>

## Elementary: Making the Most of Snack Time!



**“If you don't like something, change it. If you can't change it, change your attitude. Don't complain.”**

—Maya Angelou

For those of you who incorporate snack time into your daily morning curriculum, here are some tips to spice up this activity:

**1 Get organized!** During your daily setup for art and story time, also gather basic snack supplies (cups, napkins, pitchers) so they are ready when you need them.

**2 Use helping hands.** Children really enjoy helping you with snack-time arrangements. Let children help set the table and pass out snack. Also, have sponges easily available for them to wash the tables after play time.

**3 Personalize snack time.** Make snack time a special experience by encouraging children to obtain their own labeled or photo mug from a designated shelf to bring to the snack area. Children can decorate their own place mats, which you can laminate or cover with

contact paper for easy cleaning.

**4 Keep it clean.** Encourage children to assist with scrubbing tables, washing food and food-related items (apples, bowls), and washing their own hands so that they learn in natural ways how to stay healthy.

**5 Offer variety.** Make delicious theme-related snacks (for instance, bananas and cheese both relate to the color yellow). Introduce ethnic foods and invite parents to participate



in the preparation with the children.

**6 Choose child-size snack supplies.** Make sure chairs and tables are appropriately sized so children can seat themselves and eat without wobbling. Provide small pitchers so children can easily pour their own juice. Encourage self-serving from

easy-to-handle plates and bowls.

**7 Encourage independence.** Invite children to make their own snacks—this can be as simple as having them spread peanut butter on bread. Have mops and sponges handy for spills and keep a trash bin nearby.

**8 Play a little music.** Play soothing, pleasant music as children arrive at the table. Use a particular song or always start snack with a finger play to help children settle in.

**9 Beautify the snack spot.** Pick flowers or raise plants for a centerpiece. Design delightful accessories, such as decorated cups and name cards.

**10 Sit, relax, and enjoy.** Encourage the sharing of conversations and ideas as well as the food experiences. Informal unhurried discussions help children get to know one another. Always sit down with the children so they can observe as you model appropriate social behavior.

## New Teacher Support Participants:



**Tony Neely**  
Lebanon High School  
Government



**Kira Leavens**  
Wilson Central High School  
English II-III & AP English III

### WHY DID YOU BECOME A TEACHER?

*“Teaching was the only field that I knew of where I could combine my desire to serve and minister to high school students with my love of social studies.”—Tony Neely*

### WHY DID YOU BECOME A TEACHER?

*“I love literature and discussing literature. I became a teacher to help others discover their own love of literature.”—Kira Leavens*



## Promoting Positive Self-Esteem: Marking Papers

Many of the things teachers do to promote, or inhibit, positive self-esteem, comes from unintended actions. There are obvious things teachers do, such as who is called on in the class, who's papers are posted on the bulletin boards...but there are less obvious things that are done; actions which directly affect the students positive self-esteem. The most frequent area where this is the case is with marking student papers.

The following are some quick tips which any teacher can immediately use in improving the positive self-esteem in the classroom:

**NEVER GRADE IN RED INK.** Red is a "negative" color. Think: stop signs and lights, warning labels, poisen, etc. Our society has conditioned us to immediately view red as something negative. Subconsciously, (and often conscientiously), a paper that is handed back full of red marks tells the student that he or she is a "dummy". A "self-fulfilling prophesy" often results with these students!

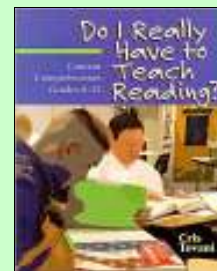
**USE GREEN OR BLUE INK.** Green, on the other hand, is a "positive" color, as is blue to a lesser extent. When green is used, corrections, or markings, become more of a "constructive criticism" type of comment.

**USE A SLASH "/" RATHER THAN AN "X" WHEN MARKING A WRONG ANSWER.** Again, for the same reasons one does not use red ink. The "X" is a negative symbol.

**MARK NUMBER RIGHT OUT OF THE TOTAL, VERSUS MINUS THE NUMBER WRONG.** Do you accentuate the positive, or the negative? 2/20 still looks better than -18.



## From the Bookshelf:



### Do I Really Have to Teach Reading?: Content Comprehension, Grades 6-12 by Cris Tovani

For someone looking for some practical strategies to help struggling readers make progress, there isn't a better place to look than this book. Tovani provides a number of strategies along with templates and appendices to help teachers put her ideas into immediate practice. And the strategies are good ones that should provide help to teachers, something too often sorely lacking in these kinds of books.

Tovani is also an excellent writer who provides a number of inspirational anecdotes from her own teaching and workshop experience. She writes about how her strategies can be used in a variety of curricular settings because, in this world of "writing across the curriculum," teachers in every subject area need to be able to address reading issues. And many of her anecdotes illustrate the "push back" we often see from teachers who feel this is just another thing they're being unfairly asked to do.



### A Long Way from Chicago by Richard Peck

8-12 years of age



## Master Teacher Tips... Parent Relationships

When you are talking to parents, avoid comparing siblings. Many teachers assume that if we say something good about sister or brother, the parent will be pleased. This may or may not be true. To create a new relationships, treat each child as though he or she is the first you have encountered in the family. This gives students the chance to be individually successful—and you the best chance to relate to them and parents more effectively.

When talking to a parent about the misbehavior of his or her child, it is important to plan what you are going to say and how you are going to say it. However, don't let your plan get in the way of your effectiveness. This is less apt to happen if you will go slow and remember the rules of "pause" and "silence". It's almost always a good idea to pause and allow your words time to sink in. Likewise, giving yourself and the parent silence while you both think, reflect, and measure your words can be much more effective than delivering a "rapid fire" of words. Pause and silence are also good ways to avoid rushing into a decision or action that either you or the parent does not want.



## Teacher FAQ

**Question: How many weeks, months, or years of experience does it take before a teacher feels confident and competent in the classroom?**

**Answer: Generally speaking, it takes about two years before a teacher feels comfortable in the classroom. That doesn't mean, however, that first and second year teachers don't have periods of time when they feel self-assured and proficient, or that highly experienced teachers never have moments of doubt.**

## For a Laugh!

