



Teacher Tip of the Week

New Teacher Support Program 2009-2010

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September 2009

Vol. 5 Issue 9

Teacher Tip of the Week
New Teacher Support
Program
Wilson County Schools
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How does your principal look at you?

HOW TO DO IT— CHECKLIST



Keep Track of Time

A small, portable digital timer is an effective tool for keeping track of time during a lesson. For example, you could set the timer for five minutes as the students complete a warm-up activity. Then, give your instruction for the day and set the timer for the amount of time left for students to work independently (the amount of time left in the period minus five or ten minutes for the closure activity and clean up).



Educational administrators who hire teachers have an extremely important job. They have the responsibility of placing a qualified professional into each and every classroom. There are many factors important for school effectiveness, but the most important is teacher quality. Principals and personnel directors may differ somewhat in their priorities for teacher selection, but, for the most part, they all agree on the basic characteristics for effective teachers.

Below are the characteristics that educational administrators would like to see in their teachers -- qualities that benefit students, improve instruction, and help an organization to run much more smoothly. Examine these to see which ones you exhibit well and which ones you need to develop.



FIFTEEN KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Exhibit enthusiasm: If you are enthusiastic about teaching, show it! Make learning fun. Your eagerness for teaching will make a difference in the motivation of your students. Beyond the classroom, it helps build a sense of teamwork. Enthusiasm is contagious.

Know your content: Keep up with your field of expertise. If you teach kindergarten, subscribe to an early childhood journal. If you teach chemistry, attend the seminar at the local college. No matter if this is your first year or your thirtieth, keep up with changing trends in your field of expertise.

Be organized: Efficient organization allows you to spend more learning time with students. Have a way of handling routines -- collecting student work, handing out materials, posting assignments, what to do when finished with an assignment, communicating class news, etc. Established routines keep the class on track and give you more time for teaching and engaging students.

Teach actively: Principals, like other supervisors and managers of people, appreciate those who work hard. Effective teachers are involved, they

move around, they don't stand around, but are busy. They are actively involved with students and with other staff.

Show a good attitude: The French philosopher, Voltaire, said, "the most courageous decision one makes each day is the decision to be in a good mood." Children don't need teachers who stay in a foul mood. They need models with positive attitudes. Listen to what you say to others and to your tone of voice. You should be displaying care, concern, and respect. Likewise, administrators need to reflect good attitudes for teachers, students, and the community.

Establish successful classroom management: Establish and enforce your classroom management system from the first day of class. Discipline and reasonable structure are essential for students to be on task and to have an orderly class environment. Be consistent

Continued on page two...



HAVE A WONDERFUL, RELAXFUL AND
REJUVENATING FALL BREAK

OCTOBER 5-16

Website: www.wcschools.com

How does your principal look at you? (Cont. from page 1)

Be consistent and fair. Avoid making rules that you do not enforce consistently, for students soon learn that what you say does not matter.

Pace instruction: The amount learned is related to the opportunity to learn. Students learn the most by doing, not by watching, not by standing in line, and not by listening. Plan an instructional time line for your courses. Nothing is worse than approaching the end of the school year and realizing there is not enough time to finish all that is in the course of study.

Maintain good people skills: On a primary report card, this trait is referred to as "works well with others." Administrators need teachers who work well with other people. If people don't like your behavior as a teacher, they will not want to be around you, much less perform for you! This is true for colleagues and parents as well as for students. Education is a people business. Good human relations skills are imperative for successful teachers!

Communicate clearly: Effective teachers give information clearly. Be concise. Demonstrate as well as explain. When presenting new information teachers must give accurate directions. This process includes explaining, outlining, summarizing, and reviewing. Too often children have no idea what they are learning or why they are learning it.

Question effectively: Questioning is a powerful teaching tool. It is through questioning that productive thinking occurs. Ask questions directed to the whole class as well as to individuals. When directing a question to individual students, ask the question first before calling student names. Give wait time for students to think through their responses. Do not call on names too soon. An example of a less effective method: "Nancy, what do you think was Edison's most useful invention and why?" What happens? When someone's name is mentioned, others relax and are not involved. But the teacher could say, "What was Edison's most useful invention and why?" and pause for about 3 to 5 seconds. This wait time keeps everyone involved and gives students a chance to think. It seems like a long time to wait, but the method is used efficiently by many successful teachers.

Differentiate instruction: One of the biggest challenges to teaching is working with students of varying learning styles, personalities, and rates of learning. Teachers need to mix auditory, visual, and hands-on techniques. For specific lessons, subgroup students with similar weaknesses or skill gaps.

Build success into your class: Success rate is important. If work is continuously too hard for a student, he/she can become frustrated, resulting in behavior problems and loss of effort. Research indicates that a success rate of at least eighty percent is optimal. When students are not successful, provide further instruction and/or simplify the task until they can master the task.

Hold high expectations: Principals want teachers who expect their students to learn. High expectations need to be communicated for good performance. Successful teachers don't just accept participation but they require it. One can be demanding without being unpleasant or mean. In fact, students respect teachers who expect them to do their best.

Create a pleasant atmosphere: Don't allow your classroom to send out the aura of the haunted house on the hill. Dismal, drab, and dreary will decrease the percentage of learning. Cheerful and happy classrooms will stimulate learning. Teachers don't have to create magic kingdoms to promote learning, but a pleasant room where students feel comfortable is a must for turning up the academic burner.

Be flexible: So much of teaching requires flexibility. Can you adjust when timely topics come up instead of



“That is what learning is. You suddenly understand something you've understood all your life, but in a new way.”
—Doris Lessing

staying with your lesson plan? Are you sensitive enough to student needs that you can vary from your routines and rules when necessary to help a child? Do you stay in control of your emotions and positive when your best-made plans have to be altered due to circumstances beyond your control? As a recent saying goes, "The flexible shall not be bent out of shape." —Robert Glenn, South Carolina schools

Where do you need to improve?

'09-'10

NEW TEACHER SUPPORT PROGRAM PARTICIPANTSBlake Tarter

Watertown Elementary

Physical Education, Grades 4-8

WHY DID YOU BECOME A TEACHER?

"I truly enjoy health and fitness. I want to share this enjoyment with as many people as possible. The best way for me to improve people's lives is by creating a classroom full of motivation and learning. If I can do this for children, then the rest of their lives will be improved."—Blake Tarter

TEACHER WEBSITE of THE WEEK:

<http://www.onthedia.org/>

On the Media

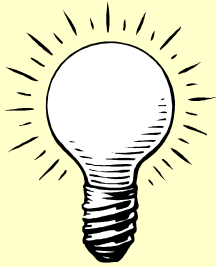
Every week, many NPR stations present this look at how the media all around us reports and affects current events. However, you and your class don't have to be around when your local station broadcasts the program. The program's web site offers podcasts (downloadable audio files) of each segment or the entire show along with transcripts. Each entry also features links to related information and a discussion forum. Sign up for the weekly email newsletter with updates on previous reports and previews of upcoming ones. The program segments, which generally run less than 10 minutes, are always well done. This is a great resource for high school journalism students, of course, but also for social studies and language arts.

**OFF THE BOOKSHELF**

**Getting to Got It!:
Helping Struggling
Students Learn How
to Learn
by Betty K. Garner**

In this book, Betty K. Garner focuses on why students struggle and what teachers can do to help them become self-directed learners. Difficulty reading, remembering, paying attention, or following directions are not the reasons students fail but symptoms of the true problem: underdeveloped cognitive structures—the mental processes necessary to connect new information with prior knowledge; organize information into patterns and relationships; formulate rules that make information processing automatic, fast, and predictable; and abstract generalizable principles that allow them to transfer and apply learning.

"Betty Garner has done a wonderful job of giving teachers the practical information they need to identify areas where students lack strong cognitive structures. Not only does she do this, but she gives easy to follow suggestions for helping students build those structures so they can be successful. A must read for all teachers Pre-K to adult learners."



Strategies for New Teachers . . .

POTENTIAL PITFALLS TO WEIGHTED GRADES

- You must evaluate and grade a statistically significant number of assignments in each category to keep one number of assignments in each category to keep one or two assignments from unfairly impacting the grade. E.g., if you do a lot alternative type assessments (brochures, presentations, reports, posters, etc.) you might weigh these “projects” as 55% of the total grade, dividing the rest of the grade among class work, homework, tests and quizzes. But if you assign only a few projects in a quarter, a student scoring low on them might get a “C” for the quarter even if that student achieves 100% on most other work.

TOTAL POINTS

The total points grading system categorizes all assignments together without differentiating among assignments or how they are weighted. Final grades are determined by dividing points earned in the marking period by the total points possible.

TIPS FOR USING TOTAL POINTS

Differentiate between different types of assignments by having some “count” more than others. For example, homework assignments could count for 10 points while tests count as 100 points. This gives some measure of weight to assignments that are more significant than others.



MARK YOUR CALENDAR

NATIONAL BOOK MONTH

NATIONAL DENTAL
HYGIENE MONTH

POSITIVE ATTITUDE
MONTH

UNIVERSAL CHILDREN'S
WEEK
October 1-7

WORLD SPACE WEEK
October 4-10

KIDS' GOAL SETTING
WEEK
October 5-10



Back to school

Our teacher talks to herself; does yours?
Yes, but she doesn't realize it; she thinks we're actually listening!