
Classroom Toolkit Newsletter

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Center for Creative Learning, San Antonio, Texas

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***** NEWS NUGGETS *****

- 1 -

-> News Nuggets <-

Hurray!

ClassroomToolkit received our first newsletter subscription (10-14-05).

I guess this means that I have to sit down and write the newsletter. :-)

***** SITE PROGRESS *****

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-> Site Progress <-

We have not been posting much to the site since we have been working on a couple of other projects:

- 1. A presentation and CD for the local PBS station on

Graphic Organizers

- 2. A proposal for the NECC 2006 conference
- 3. A CD about Visual Phonetics

-> Results <-

- * The Graphic Organizer presentation was well attended (only one seat left during the first session) and participant reaction was positive
- * The graphics involved in creating the Visual Phonetics CD presents some challenge and developing the graphics is taking a substantial amount of time
- * The Web site is still in the experimental stage. We are testing to see if the built-in Web editor attracts more traffic than the ordinary type of Web site using tools such as Dreamweaver(TM).

==**==**==**==**== OPEN SOURCE PROGRESS **==**==**==**==**==**==

 - 3 -

-> Open Source in Education <-

Progress on our Goal for sparking an Open Source in Education Movement:

Our goals is to find teachers who are willing to share the materials that they create.

-> Our Latest Strategy <-

We finished our proposal for NECC 2006 and submitted this proposal last week.

This is a proposal for a hands-on lab for creating teacher-made tests that keep students focused on the curriculum (instead of exiting students from the curriculum to practice taking tests).

We will share these materials on our Web site as we develop them. We hope that this strategy will generate feedback and spark interest in the Open Source in Education movement.

-> Partners Needed <-

If you want to partner in developing materials for use as Open Source Content, please let us know.

Send your proposal to:

partners-svbi@classroomtoolkit.com

Unlike other Web sites, we insist that authors to retain the copyright to their materials.

Of course, you have to give us written permission for us to publish your material on our site.

Also, amazingly, these "correct things to do" are not complicated and intricate. These correct things mean establishing a simple plan and sticking to it. (I have not conducted interviews in a scientific way, but my hunch is that poor teachers have a more complicated (and more ideologic) way of describing what they do.

Master teachers are more practical.

The master teacher develops a simple plan, has a simple explanation for effective teaching, and stays focused on the plan.

Consistency is the key.

What poor teachers do, besides trying to implement too complicated a plan; is to change their plans in midstream.

Effective teachers know what they are going to do, and they remain on track.

Poor teachers panic, and decide that what is needed is a complete program change. Of course, there always will be some author to fill the air with the sweet smell of jargon and ideology that lures the poor teacher into this trap.

In the old days (of the Behavior Modification fad of the 1970s), the folks who counted behaviors could predict that negative behaviors in classrooms would re-emerge each two weeks.

The counted negative behaviors would decrease steadily for two weeks as the behavior management plan progressed, then the number of negative behaviors would spike upward.

Here was the turning point that differentiated effective teachers from their try-harder-succeed-less colleagues:

The master teachers stuck to what was working.

The master teacher would say to themselves, "The behavior plan has been working well. I'll hold the course steady."

The poor teacher would say to themselves, "I thought that things were getting better, but I was wrong. Everything is falling apart. I better change to a new behavior program."

For the Master Teacher, sticking with the behavior plan resulted in decreased negative behavior, and a smaller spike in negative behavior two weeks later. This pattern of improvement continues for the rest of the school year.

For the poor teacher, the every-two-week change in behavior management plans results in reinforcing (rather than extinguishing the negative behaviors)...behaviors then become harder to eliminate. This means a miserable, stress-filled school year, and the implementing of yet another new behavior plan.

Remember: "Simplicity and Consistency." Keep it simple and stick with it.

The message translated into various learning styles: :-)

A download trial version of SnagIt(TM) is available from...

<http://www.techsmith.com/download/freetrials.asp>

The best price I found when I was purchasing my copy of SnagIt(TM) (actually I brought the SnagIt/ Camtasia(TM) bundle) was from my friend Rob Wehman at CDW*G.

Give Rob a call at 1-866-339-7397 if you want to know the current price of these programs.

Rob will help you, or put you in contact with someone from their company who can.

Unfortunately, CDW*G doesn't carry the Visual Thesaurus(TM) program.

-> Dealing with Information Overload <-

Ways to beat back the overload...

Do

- * Develop an information management strategy that works for you
- * Filter information
- * Filter out jargon and ideology (Treat these as the educational equivalent of Spam)
- * Accept that not all available data can be examined prior to a decision
- * Trust your instincts and intuition
- * Attempt to recognize quality data
- * Take control

Don't

- * Let information, grading papers and high-stakes testing take control of you by forcing you to work 50 to 70 hours per week
- * Attempt to examine every piece of data available.
- * Focus on things beyond your control
- * Try to break education down into state high-stakes test objectives, analyzed by student past performance
- * Take cell phones or computers on vacations

Added to from Source:

<http://www.infoworld.com/articles/ca/xml/00/01/10/000110caoverload.html>

***** BOOK REVIEW *****

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-> Making Portfolios, Products, and Performances:
Meaningful and Manageable for Students and Teachers:
Instructional Strategies and Thematic Activities,
Including a Pull-Out Graphic Organizer for Integrating
Instruction <-

Author(s): Forte, Imogene and Schurr, Sandra
ISBN: 0865303134
Format: Paperback, 143pp
Pub. Date: June 1996

Publisher: Incentive Publications, Incorporated
Cost: \$15.95
Available at: Amazon and Barnes and Noble
Used Copies sell for less on eBay.com or Amazon.com

The Book's Topic:

Stretching instruction with Multiple Intelligences and Performance Learning while using Higher-Order Thinking Skills

Keywords:

- * Portfolios
- * Authentic Products
- * Student Performances

Main Idea:

Students learn more when learning is activity-based, hands-on and geared to higher-order thinking

Quotes:

"Portfolios, products and performances are the most widely recognized forms of authentic assessment in use today. Students enjoy the responsibility of selecting, preparing and evaluating work to be included in their portfolios; developing products that are in keeping with specific evaluation criteria; and organizing performances that afford them a profound sense of ownership and a tremendous feeling of accomplishment" (Page viii)

"In recognizing and attempting to meet the needs of individual student learning styles within a group setting, teachers are finding the interdisciplinary unit to be an invaluable aid. The unit organization not only provides a framework for meaningful integration of subject matter, but also offers a wide variety of activities for students to make choices that best accommodate his or her own interests and learning styles." (Page 125)

Issues Addressed by the Book:

- * Paper and pencil, multiple choice tests are not sufficiently useful in assessing instruction and motivating students
- * Children learn in a wide variety of ways, and multiple channels are needed to measure each student's progress
- * Thematic units allow students to knit subject matter information together in meaningful ways. These units create richer, more dynamic learning experiences for children

The Book's Shortcomings:

This book is actually a workbook for teachers, and the pullout graphic organizer is probably worth the price of the book.

The bold, block-style font typography makes the useful materials in the book more difficult to read, and the elementary school style art work probably convinces many teachers of older students that the book isn't for them. The book really is useful for teachers of all grade levels.

Comments:

Although the book has been in publication for about ten years, the ideas presented by the authors have not caught on to the extent that these ideas merit.

What went wrong has been that the tide of education has swept in the opposite direction with the "No Child Left Behind" emphasis upon high-stakes testing. Educators may have to endure three more years of NCLB before the teaching process can be restored to a more reasonable view of what educational prescriptions benefit children.

In the meantime, teachers can use this book as a guide for actually delivering quality instruction, even in a teach-to-the-test environment.

Rating (Four Point scale):

- Useful 3
- _ Applicable 4
- _ Relevant 4
- _ Innovative 2
- _ Original 2
- _ Interesting 2

- Overall Rating 2.8

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----- REQUESTS =====

- 7 -

-> Requests <-

What would you like to see in this newsletter?

Send your requests for future articles to:

requests-svbi@classroomtoolkit.com

=====
----- FEEDBACK =====

- 8 -

Site or Newsletter Feedback:

Send feedback and suggestions to:

feedback-svbi@classroomtoolkit.com

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----- ARTICLE PREVIEW =====

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-> Article Preview <-

Our next newsletter will feature an article about the Mutual Story Telling Technique.

Let us know if you have a special topic in mind for a future newsletter.

Send your

articles-svbi@classroomtoolkit.com

Feel free to send this newsletter to a friend.

We won't send a newsletter to anyone unless they request to be placed on our mailing list.

But, if you know someone that you think might benefit from our newsletter, send them to this address:

<http://www.classroomtoolkit.com/join-us.html>

<http://www.classroomtoolkit.com>

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