
Classroom Toolkit Newsletter

November 30, 2005 Issue #2 Volume 1 Number 2

Written by Joseph Chmielewski, M.S., L.P.C.

(c) copyright 2005

Center for Creative Learning, San Antonio, Texas

***** TABLE OF CONTENTS *****

- 1. News Nuggets
- 2. Site Progress
- 3. Open Source in Education
- 4. Featured Article:
 - The Mutual Storytelling Technique -- Power and Simplicity with Little or No Work
- 5. Top Tips
 - TQ -- Free resources to help improve your "Time Quotient"
 - Tips to Help you Save Time
- 6. Book Review
- 7. Requests
- 8. Site or Newsletter Feedback
- 9. Upcoming Articles

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

- 1 -

-> News Nuggets <-

We are up to five subscriptions for our newsletter.

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

- 2 -

-> Site Progress <-

Site Strategy

Our site's strategy is to provide a time-saving plan and a management framework for teachers. This benefits our visitors with a value beyond just searching the Internet for an endless supply of unconnected, free materials because finding just the "right" materials for a specific takes more time than it saves.

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

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

-> Our Latest Strategy <-

We will use the Google(TM)Ad Sense ads to help re-write our pages. The idea here is that if we can change what the search engine sees in placing these ads, then the right visitors will find our site.

-> 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 retain the copyright to their materials.

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

By posting your information, other teachers will use your materials. So why would you want to share your materials and still retain a copyright?

- * You can do your part in stemming the tide against over priced corporate materials
- * You can gain exposure for your ideas and skills if you are (or wish to become) a consultant
- * You can list the materials you share as publications on your resume
- * You can test whether other teachers like your materials, and if they do, collect your materials into a book or eBook
- * You can test whether there is enough interest in your materials for you to start a Web site of your own, or, to develop your own online business

-> Writing for the Web: A How-To <-

If you want more information on how to write for the Web, check out this free course.

This link can get you started in developing Open Source Educational Content for the Web.

<http://netwriting.sitesell.com/24x7-learning.html>

If you want more information about the process of creating a site without knowing HTML or without purchasing high-end (expensive) Web development tools, check out...

<http://buildit.sitesell.com/24x7-learning.html>

***** FEATURED ARTICLES *****

- 4 -

-> The Mutual Storytelling Technique <-
Power and Simplicity with Little or No Work

The Mutual Storytelling Technique provides one of those techniques that offers so many special advantages to teachers that they cannot afford to pass up using the technique each day.

Here is what the technique is, and here is how to use it.

The technique is simple. The teacher listens to a story that the student relates.

Then, the teacher relates the same story, but with a slightly more adaptive, solution oriented, mentally healthy, mature ending.

Then, the student retells the story, and the teacher repeats the process of upgrading the story in a more adaptive, appropriate ending.

That is all the work that you are required to do to use this technique effectively. Of course, you can adapt, embellish and elaborate the technique in any creative way that you desire.

There are no right or wrong ways to finish the story. The story is always a work in progress.

The technique also works well with teacher-written stories.

In this case, the teacher listens to issues, concerns or challenges that the students are facing. The teacher then writes all the retellings as stories for use in classroom reading, English, grammar, spelling, history, science, etc. You get the picture.

The stories can be about anything. Fables can be used to illustrate science principles or historical events or current events. (Human foibles haven't changed much in 2,500 years.)

The stories are powerful because students pay attention to the moral of these lessons whereas students "tune out" if they receive the same information while being lectured to.

It is also beneficial to begin mapping the language of Multiple Intelligences into the stories as you gain confidence in this technique.

This is just a matter of adding words to the story that associate with the five senses, i.e., touch, feeling, sight, sound, taste, smell.

Here, the teacher can allow students to brainstorm endings to the story in progress. Then, the last ending (the teacher's) turns out to be the most socially, emotionally, mentally healthy, or adaptive ending.

It is possible to use the same technique with textbook and adopted curriculum content, with students and teacher supplying better endings than the original author. However, there are two flaws with this approach:

The George Lucas Educational Foundation (GLEF) offers a free print magazine, newsletter and other free online resources. Get it all from:

<http://www.edutopia.org>

The materials presented by the GLEF are creative, innovative and honest.

An article by Winton Marcellus in a recent issue provided more insight about the purpose and meaning of education (heart and vitality) in a single page than I have found in the collective wisdom of any three politicians or superintendents. [Politicians and superintendents? Please excuse me if I am being redundant.]

Check these resources out for inspiration and a positive attitude. These resources may not save you any time, but they can inspire or renew your belief in the possibility of a better world of learning for our students.

->Teacher Resources<-

It took me about an hour to find a Web site that seemed to have something useful for teachers.

Here is a link where 51 government agencies contribute free materials and information for teachers!

<http://www.ed.gov/free/what.html>

Do you think that maybe we are sometimes a bit too harsh concerning our government? The government, like school districts, is different than the politicians that yank its' progress around (or gridlock it).

On second thought, the government (like school districts) brings this satire upon itself by dancing to the beat of political drum instead of supporting each one of us in doing what we know is the right thing to do.

->Teacher Discounts<-

It was equally difficult finding a discount source to recommend for this issue. One representative who promised teacher discounts during a trade show has not returned any of my three calls.

So, I am going to repeat our recommendation of Rob Wehman of CDW*G again.

Rob can provide discounts on both hardware and software, and he will call you back. Rob also can give you prices on the spot, and he will steer you in the right direction when what you thought was the best solution might look different if you have more information.

Give Rob a call at 1-866-339-7397 if you want immediate current prices for any of your hardware or software needs.

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

Rob's E-mail address is robweh@cdwg.com

-> Short Article <-

Tips to Help you Save Time

The goal of Classroom Toolkit is to help teachers create more time. We suggest that teachers do this by strategic planning, by reusing components, and by implementing tactical lessons that

All students can learn if they are provided with appropriate instruction. But, this appropriate instruction is different than what most schools now provide.

What exists now is a carryover from the Industrial Revolution, i.e., all students "learning" the same thing at the same time.

This is the brilliance of mass production...uniformity of procedures and products. What is missing from education is the "quality control" part of the "education factory."

Had this model ever been implemented fully, we might have learned how "majorly" flawed (as teenagers would say) this factory-based model is. What occurred instead was that schools focused upon another tenet of factory production...produce your product as cheaply as possible.

What schools have evolved to is a "Wal-Mart" type of mass distribution of student learning...marginal quality at a low price...but something for everybody.

Mr. Friedman sells a number of other high-priced books, and this book seems to be an abstract of his ideas. This book seems to target parents more than it provides real-life solutions for teachers.

The main ideas that Mr. Friedman presents are:

1. All students can learn if they are given enough time and help
2. Individual tutoring is the only solution to ensure that all students keep up with the course of study of their curriculum

Mr. Friedman states that this tutoring can be acquired from a variety of low cost or cost-free ways, so that schools can afford to provide tutoring options for all students.

Unfortunately, Mr. Friedman does not provide a single instance where the methods that he proposes have been implemented district-wide, and where the expected results of improved student outcomes were forthcoming.

This book's solution might be similar to "world peace would be a reality if everyone agreed to get along."

Mr. Friedman relies on "huge numbers" of research studies to support his ideas. Unfortunately, Mr. Friedman only lists the numbers.

Quotes:

"Most teachers are constrained in the amount of time that they can teach, though. It is difficult, if not impossible, for teachers to accomplish their work if administrators add extra classroom chores, and very few teachers have sufficient after-class time for the special tutoring so many students need. It is essential, therefore, for more classroom time to be devoted to teaching." p. 59.

"The amount of time spent on a subject affects how well the subject is learned, yet instructional planners routinely fail to budget enough time for students, focusing their planning efforts instead on the instructional tasks themselves. In addition, the time spent on some tasks such as multiplication tables, is easier to estimate than time spent on other, more complex tasks, such as conducting library research." p. 62.

"Children who are disruptive affect their own learning and the education of the entire classroom. Disciplinary problems can drain a teacher's energy and waste enormous amounts of time if not handled properly. Teaching is hard enough without trying to teach in the midst of chaos. The difference between teachers who can successfully control a classroom and those who can't is how they introduce their classroom rules and then how consistently those rules are enforced. Students who infringe on their classmates by acting out, seeking attention, or otherwise disrupting class need to be dealt with swiftly and surely." p. 64.

"Many teachers have a difficult time relating the priorities of test experts to their classrooms. For instance, the concept of objectivity tends to become a footnote to the test experts while to teachers, objectivity is of greater importance in the classroom, since teachers must defend against accusations of subjectivity to irate students, parents, elected officials, and attorneys." P 86.

"Another problem for teachers and parents is the statistics are used extensively by national test publishers in developing standardized norm-referenced tests. Unfortunately, some of those tests take on a mathematical life of their own, divorced from the context of educators and the essence of instructional programs that the test is supposed to measure. When this happens, tests lose their usefulness." p. 87.

"Educators and parents must also get involved in the evolving world of testing to ensure that the new accountability movement doesn't crush initiative and talent...This process has curbed educators' discretion and initiative in unwelcome ways. Teachers and administrators should be encouraged to go beyond meeting minimum standards to enrich their students' education. Instead, in far too many places, teachers are forced to "teach to the test," throttling academic freedom and reducing enrichment activities." p. 94.

"The consequences of accountability testing overkill are enormous. Severe penalties are mandated against educators when too many of their students do not pass the test. Teachers in fear of losing their jobs feel coerced to teach to the test. The tests are so comprehensive that very little teaching time is left for teacher initiative and enrichment. The test oppress educators and increase testing time during the school year substantially, leaving less time for teaching." p. 95.

Issues Addressed by the Book:

- * Research-based strategies for teaching
- * Ensuring that all students have enough time to master prerequisite information before trudging on with new material
- * Focusing upon creativity, initiative and problem-solving in teaching instead of targeting minimal skills and high-stakes tests

The Book's Shortcomings:

The books strengths are actually the book's weaknesses. The book condenses a lot of

***** FEEDBACK *****

- 8 -

Site or Newsletter Feedback:

Send feedback and suggestions to:

feedback-svbi@classroomtoolkit.com

***** ARTICLE PREVIEW *****

- 9 -

-> Article Preview <-

Our next newsletter will feature an article about the
Flaws, Fallacies and Foolishness of Benchmark Testing

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>

Written by Joseph Chmielewski, M.S., L.P.C.
Center for Creative Learning
(c) copyright 2005
San Antonio, Texas
U.S.A. 78265

~~~~~