
Classroom Toolkit Newsletter

February 28, 2006 Issue #2 Volume 2 Number 2

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

(c) copyright 2006

Center for Creative Learning, San Antonio, Texas

Note: Attachments will be posted for one week at:

<http://www.sitebuildersuite.com/classroomtoolkit/attachments.zip>

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

- 1. News Nuggets
- 2. Site Progress
- 3. Open Source in Education
- 4. Featured Article:
 - Telling it Like it Is in Education: The Muffled, Muzzled, Muted Sounds of Teacher Silencing
- 5. Top Tips
 -
 - Free Program --
 - Tips to Help you Save Time and Money --
 - Short Article --
 - Facing Down the High-Stakes Test
- 6. Book Review
- 7. Requests
- 8. Site or Newsletter Feedback
- 9. Upcoming Articles

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

- 1 -

-> News Nuggets <-

January 9, 2006 marked the fourth anniversary of the "No Child Left Behind" Act.

Here was the press release:

U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings...

"The fourth anniversary of the No Child Left Behind Act, signed into law by President Bush on January 8, 2002, is a time to boldly look ahead, confident that

-> Site Progress <-

Site Strategy

Our site's strategy is to provide a time-saving plan and a management framework for teachers. This benefits our site's visitors with a value beyond just searching the Internet for an endless supply of unconnected, free materials.

Finding just the "right" materials for a specific lesson takes more time than it saves.

It saves more time to create your own materials, if you have a strategy for reusable templates and generic components.

We offer our materials freely to show teachers how this strategy for saving time actually works.

In addition, our site demonstrates a practical method for integrating technology into instruction. This is a stated goal of almost all school districts and the federal government. However, it is easier to say that the integration of technology is a priority than it is to provide adequate funding for equipment, materials and professional development.

We show teachers how to integrate technology without adding another hour or two to their workday. In fact, we show teachers how to save time.

Site Progress

- * We are cross-linking pages
- * We are still changing and testing key words
 - Our site has finally begun to be show up on the search engines
- * We added Terms of Use, a Privacy Policy, and a Reciprocal Public Materials License
- * We added Print Style Sheets to our site to facilitate the printing of our pages while saving ink.
 - Non-essential parts of the page, such as navigation, will not print
 - _ Visitors who use a standards-compliant browser, such as Firefox(TM) or Netscape(TM) 8, will see the links written out
- * We developed a Classroom Toolkit Blog
 - <http://classroomtoolkit.sitebuildersuite.com/>
- * We began posting reprints of our Newsletter Articles
- * We added Open Source Hardware, Software, and Web CMS to our site

Our eZine is still in production. We focused upon updating our site and building the Blog because these seemed to be a higher priority, especially since our traffic is increasing.

Besides, our newsletter is more like eZines from other sites and our eZine is more like an eBook.

* Here is our finalized eZine publication schedule.

The focus of these issues will be:

Volume 1 -- 2006:

Winter Teacher Planning and Project Management

Spring Multiple Intelligences

Summer Higher-Order Thinking

Fall Project-based Learning

Volume 2 -- 2007:

Winter Teaching to the Test: A How-to that
doesn't Sabotage Learning

Spring Teacher Creativity and Performance Learning

Summer Mathematical Cross-Pollination: Integrating
Math into all Content Areas

Fall Visual Phonetics

If you have any ideas for what you would like to see included in
our eZine please send your suggestions to...

suggestions-svbi@classroomtoolkit.com

If you would like to contribute an article, please let us know.

Our eZine publication date was pushed back so that we could
complete site updates including:

- * Newsletter Article Reprints
- * Classroom Toolkit Blog
- * Facelift for the Google(TM) AdSense ads
- * New distribution system for Newsletter Attachments

Since our newsletter contains more content than most other
folks place in an eZine, we hope you agree that the eZine
was worth the wait.

Our newsletter distribution has reached 24 subscribers. This
number means that hand address each newsletter and adding
the attachment takes too long to be feasible. So,

- * The source code attachments will be posted on another site for
one week...

<http://www.sitebuildersuite.com/classroomtoolkit/attachments.zip>

- * A few subscribers' E-mail systems didn't allow attachments,
anyway

- * A new Newsletter delivery system will be tested

You will receive a new Opt In for the eZine. Then, the same
distribution list will be used for both the eZine and the
Newsletter.

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

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

By posting your materials, 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 content
- * 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>

Texas Initiative

We learned of the "Strategic Open Source of Texas initiative this past weekend, and focused our efforts to support this project.

- * We created a new section of our Website to promote this group, and joined immediately

Here is a link:

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

Consider joining if you haven't already.

View all the links at:

<http://www.classroomtoolkit.com/education-news.html>

So, even the most democratic principal must influence campus staff to follow the policy pronouncements from "on high." This is the opposite of the kind of leadership that is needed. What is needed is for the principal to take the policies that the teaching staff identifies and develops; then push for supported and money so that teachers can do their jobs right.

But, teachers cannot tell the principal that the principal's ideas are bad, and teachers cannot tell the principal to tell the superintendent to rethink the latest initiative because the underlying assumptions, support, expertise, budget or project design are:

- * Inadequate
- * Under funded
- * Unrealistic
- * Not valid
- * Based upon unreliable data
- * Untested
- * Biased against...
- * Too much work for no additional compensation
- * Or any number of hidden, detrimental aspects that will come to light later as the initiative flops and fizzles

Worst of all, teachers cannot come right out and say that the idea, proposal, initiative, orders are "Bad for Children, and we won't do it!"

 - Sidebar -

I couldn't resist adding this Internet classic. (Origin unknown.) I changed two words to make the text appropriate for this Newsletter, but you probably will guess which words those were. :-)

--> The Plan <--

In the beginning, there was the Plan. And then came the Assumptions. And the Assumptions were without form, And the Plan was without substance. And darkness was upon the face of the Workers. And they spoke among themselves, saying, "It is a crock and it stinketh."

And the Workers went into their Supervisors and said, "It is a pail of dung and none may abide the odor thereof."

And the Supervisors went unto their Managers, saying, "It is a container of excrement and it is very strong, such that none may abide by it."

And the Managers went unto their Directors, saying, "It is a vessel of fertilizer and none may abide it's strength." And the Directors spoke amongst themselves, saying one to another, "It contains that which aids plant growth and it is very strong."

And the Directors went unto the Vice President, saying, "It promotes growth and it is very powerful."

And the Vice Presidents went unto the President, saying, "This new Plan will actively promote the growth and vigor of the company with powerful effects."

And the President looked upon the Plan and saw that it was good. And

the Plan became Policy.

This is how "Stuff Happens."

- End Sidebar -

Since it is our policy to write about what teachers can do something about, you have been wondering where this article was leading.

I'll answer that concern with a question.

What if even half of our teachers began speaking out concerning the NCLB Law, describing...

- * How poorly this law was funded
- * How poorly this law was implemented
- * How badly our students and teachers fair under this law
- * How inept our political leaders and district administrators are for insisting that teachers follow this law

Another question:

If physicians received an equivalent directive, one that would harm their patients, would they refuse to participate?

Teachers could have claimed that the law deserved to have a chance to prove whether its approach was valid. But not anymore, not after four years of detriment.

How much stress, pain, and wasted opportunities will teaches have to endure before there is a collective outcry.

Let's unmuffle, un mute, un silence our teachers so that our students can learn in a creative, dynamic, supportive environment.

Does any teacher want to speak out and join the ranks of the unemployed?

It seems like reversing this law calls for a nation-wide job action on the part of teachers. Otherwise, individual teachers who speak out will be swatted like flies on the kitchen table.

Is there an unemployed, vocal teacher that wants to start a grassroots movement to free our children from the negative effects of this law.

Or, will we be content to say nothing and wait another three years until a new administration replaces NCLB with another, equally unenlightened law? Just like NCLB replaced the "what was it? I don't remember anymore" law of the previous administration.

==**==**==**==**==**==** TOP TIPS ==**==**==**==**==**==**

- 5 -

->Top Tips <-

Snagit 8: Just released by TechSmith

<http://www.techsmith.com>

What can you do with Snagit?

Snagit(TM) 8 is a flexible screen and image capture tool that you really need.

What can you capture?

Answer: Basically anything that is visible on your monitor screen.

In addition you can:

- * Capture and send by E-mail
- * Capture and annotate with
 - Call outs and Text
 - Lines and arrows
 - Sound recordings
 - Short video clips
- * Add logos or other
- * Capture any button, menu, icon, or window
- * Capture Web pages, and save the image so that the links still work
- * Capture long Web pages or long documents (Snagit(TM) scrolls for you as it makes the capture)
- * Capture and save as a PDF file
- * Save as a Web page Image Map

Here is the Snagit(TM) 8 feature list:

<http://www.techsmith.com/snagit/featureslist.asp>

Snagit(TM) 8 will also handle basic image editing, and will convert images from one file format to another.

Note: We do not receive any commissions, kickbacks, bribes, gifts or bonuses for recommending Snagit(TM) 8. We recommend this product because it is a tool that teachers: any grade, any subject, any level can use every day.

And, at just less than \$25 for the Academic version. the price is affordable. In fact, because of the time savings possible with this new version, teachers cannot afford not to own and use this software.

You can view Snagit(TM) tutorials...

<http://www.techsmith.com/snagit/features.asp>

And, you can also subscribe to the Snagit(TM) Education newsletter...

<http://www.techsmith.com/community/subscription.asp>

-> Where to get your copy <-

- * To order Academic Snagit(TM) 8 from Academic Superstore, call Joe Harris at 1-800-854-5787 X438.

Joe's E-mail address is: joe@academicsuperstore.com

- * To order Academic Snagit(TM) 8 from CDW*G for only \$25. Call Rob Weyman at 1-866-339-7397 if you want immediate service

Rob's E-mail address: is_robweh@cdwg.com

* To order Academic Snagit(TM) 8 from TRC, call Robin Sommers at 1-800-517-2320 X 211 at only \$25.

Robin's E-mail address is: robin@gotrc.com

->Free resources<-

Carson Delloso has some free materials that are available for download from its Web site. These include:

- *Clip Art & Web Images
- * Online Bulletin Board Builder

Visit the Carson Delloso site to access these materials.

<http://www.carsondelloso.com/Cultures/en-US/funfree.htm>

->Teacher Resources<-

Don't have the funds to purchase Snagit(TM) 8, try DonationCoder's ScreenShotCaptor for a donation (or for free).

<http://www.donationcoder.com>

ScreenShotCaptor can do an amazing amount of things for a freeware/ donationware program. It is especially good for capturing multiple screen shots if you are developing a tutorial program.

DonationCoder takes donations of any size, but you do not have to donate.

DonationCoder seems to demonstrate a philosophy akin to the philosophy of ClassroomToolkit..,genuine altruism, and the genuine joy from sharing.

->Other Discounts<-

For any other hardware and software need, call Rob Wehman of CDW*G.

Give Rob a call at 1-866-339-7397 if you want immediate current prices.

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

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

-> Short Article <-

Self Care at High-Stakes Testing Time

Now is the time of year that the not-so-genuine-joy of high-stakes testing looms.

It is no coincidence that a bunch of standardized tests are called a "Battery."

Answers.Com provides us with the definitions...

- * The act of beating or pounding
- * Law. The unlawful and unwanted touching or striking of one person by another, with the intention of bringing about

a harmful or offensive contact

- * An emplacement for one or more pieces of artillery
- * A set of guns or other heavy artillery, as on a warship
- * An army artillery unit, corresponding to a company in the infantry

<http://www.answers.com/topic/battery>

When we examine the pounding that our teachers and students experience in relation to these high-stakes tests, we see that a group of tests is accurately named. :-)

And, even though teaching professionals know better than to place too much emphasis on these tests, a sense of stress often overshadows a teacher's life at this time.

When district administrators whip the atmosphere of your school into a frenzy, it is not time to bail out of education, but time to dust off your stress management books, tapes and CDs.

Don't have any at home, check some out from the library, or search the Internet.

Here are some sites:

- * Mind Tools: <http://www.mindtools.com/smpage.html>
- * About.Com: <http://stress.about.com/>
- * Future Health: <http://www.futurehealth.org/stresstips.htm>

Relaxation, slow breathing and physical exercise are the usual top tips suggested to counteract the mental focus of these tests by offering change of pace activities that will benefit you.

There are also several other strategies that may prove useful:

- * Desensitize yourself from the panic
- * Reframe the event into something positive
- * Imagine the worst that can happen, and discover that the worst that can happen is not that bad
- * Channeling your nervous energy into something positive

To desensitize yourself, you relax, and imagine scenes that at first are far away from the frantic testing scene. Then, you keep your cool as you imagine the testing getting closer and closer.

The trick here is to remain relaxed. If you start to experience stress, back off (in your imagination) and start your approach again.

Reframing involves changing the meaning of the event. This means that you find another explanation that you can agree upon.

You may have to work at this, but the technique is very powerful. A complete description of this process is beyond the scope of this short article, but elaboration can be found in...

<http://www.users.globalnet.co.uk/~rxv/demcha/reframe.htm>

Imagining the worst that can happen is self-explanatory. If the

worst isn't as bad as we fear, then, why worry about it.

Channeling your nervous energy is valuable, but doesn't actually resolve the stress issue. For example, we know that the high-stakes testing issue has accelerated because of the No Child Left Behind Act. So, if we focus our energies on lobbying and a grass-roots protest movement to get the bad law removed, we find ourselves diminishing our stress.

Unfortunately, if we are successful with our protest movement, we could find ourselves winning public office, moving to Washington D.C., and being the only person in Congress that knows chalk dust about education. This might be an even more stressful (though monetarily more lucrative) than what we currently do now in facing the high-stakes test with the same stress that a matador experiences when facing a charging bull.

==**==**==**==**==**==**== BOOK REVIEW ==**==**==**==**==**==**==

- 6 -

->Little Red Book of Selling: 12.5 Principles of Sales
Greatness--How to make sales FOREVER<-

Author: Gitomer, Jeffrey
ISBN: 1-885167-60-1
Format: Cloth Cover
Pub. Date: 2004
Publisher: Austin, TX: Bard press
<http://www.gitomer.com>
Pages: 219
Cost: \$19.95 (List)
Available: Direct from publisher, or from Amazon,
Barnes and Noble, or Borders. I found a copy on
eBay(TM) for substantially less than the list price.

The Books' Topics:

This book focuses upon the attitude, skills and talents of sales people, so you may wonder why we are reviewing it for a teachers' newsletter.

The answer is that if you substitute the word, "teacher," for the word, "salesman," you receive solid advice about what it takes to be a successful teacher.

The central themes of the Little Red Book are:

- * Customer Centered Communication
- * Building Relationships with Customers
- * Delivering Value
- * Practicing Humor and Creativity
- * Sales Person Goal Setting and Self Improvement

Now Substitute...

- * Student Centered Communication
- * Building Relationships with Students
- * Delivering Value
- * Practicing Humor and Creativity
- * Teacher Goal Setting and Self Improvement

(See what I mean?)

Keywords:

- * Self-Motivation
- * Creative Intelligence
- * Action Plan
- * Developing Creativity and Humor
- * Teachers'Habit Development
- * Attention to Opportunities

Main Idea:

Student-Centered teaching requires the "make-them-real-in-my-day-to-day-work" attitudes, skills and knowledge that are much like those of sales people.

The Little Red Book of Selling is a "keep these ideas in your mind constantly as you practice them" until you build success-habits.

Quotes:

"Climbing the ladder of success? Which way are you headed?
Hint: The secret to climbing up is to put your heart in your work. p. - Inside front cover

"If they like you and they believe you, and they trust you, and they have confidence in you...then they may buy [learn] from you." p. - Preface

"The difference between success and mediocrity is philosophy."
p. 12

"There is no quick fix, magic wand, or potion that will give you the success that you are dreaming for. So, what's the secret of sales [teaching] success? Well, it's not a single secret--it's a secret formula. It is a series of 18.5 principles, strategies, and actions that will lead you to success. p. - 20

"I am consistently amazed and disappointed at the small number of people willing to execute the simple daily self-discipline needed to achieve higher levels of success. They know it will bring them the success they dream about, yet they fail to execute." p. - 24

Issues Addressed by the Book:

Here are some of the ideas-into-action principles that Jeffery Gitomer promotes:

- * Believe you can
- * Create the environment
- * Expose yourself to what's new
- * Plan for the day
- * Become valuable
- * Have the answers your [students] need
- * Recognize opportunity
- * Take advantage of opportunity
- * Take action
- * Make mistakes
- * Be willing to risk
- * Keep your eye on the prize

- * Balance yourself
- * Invest, don't spend
- * Stick at it until you win
- * Develop and maintain a positive attitude
- * Ignore idiots and zealots

The Book's Shortcomings:

The books' shortcomings are that it is easy to read and easy to understand. And, even though the author provides a roadmap for what to do, how to do it, and when to do it...in a way that is doable...most people won't ever start.

Another shortcoming is the "salty" language that the author uses. While this language is great for sales folks, schools are conservative institutions. If children happen to pick up the book in a classroom, then report the words to their parents, this could cause trouble for the teacher.

This is a shame, because this book would be a marvelous book for students to study, beginning in the upper elementary school.

For now, teachers will have to adapt and translate lessons from this book into appropriate language.

Comments:

This book is short and easy to read. You can use the ideas that the author presents, today (if not sooner). But, will you?

Summary:

Here is another summary list of "let's-apply-these-now" suggestions from this book (p. - 209 and 210):

- * Radiate a contagious positive attitude
- * Be excited about helping others
- * Be self-assured, not arrogant
- * Like people, help people to like you
- * Be real-world smart, not just "book smart"
- * Have fun
- * Do everything "full force"
- * Live unspoken integrity
- * Be visibly honest
- * Concentrate on the details without getting caught up in them
- * Be happy on the inside

Rating (Four Point scale):

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

- Overall Rating 3.7

San Antonio, Texas
U.S.A. 78265
