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Classroom Toolkit Newsletter

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Center for Creative Learning, San Antonio, Texas

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Note: eZine is posted at:

http://www.classroomtoolkit.com/support-files/volume-1_number-1.pdf

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Treats Hard-Nosed, Street-wise Kids Crave more
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-> News Nuggets <-

Federal Reserve Board develops Kids Page.

You can check out this free resource at:

<http://www.federalreserve.gov/kids/default.htm>

This site does provide background information about the Federal Reserve Board that I bet you didn't know.

The pages have a mascot that looks like the big-footed eagle that students would draw for their pep rally for their upcoming game, maybe "Stomp the Congressional Inflaters!"

There is also a ten question quiz at the end of the page.

I suppose that the appeal of the page is that it looks like a page that your students would create for their presentation on the Federal Reserve Board for a Middle School Civics Class.

However, if the student clicks on the map as, suggested on the page, they are taken to the various sites of the Regional FED. These Regional FED sites are ones that only an economist could love.

You probably would learn something that you didn't know if you read the page (The site is a long page with a Table of Contents).

But, maybe your best bet is to use the page as an example as you praise your students abilities, and assure them that their present ions can easily be better written and look more professional than this government site.

Check it out if you teach civics.

Let us know if your students obtain any value from visiting this site.

-> 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

- * Several other reprints were added to our site
- * Our eZine finally was released. (It's more like an eBook.) Since this was our first issue, we have a better idea of what to expect. This is a classic project management issue: no past data to base project estimates on.
- * The Classroom Toolkit Blog is available, but with a newsletter and eZine, and Web site, most every avenue is covered

- * Here is our eZine publication schedule.

The focus of these issues will be:

Volume 1 -- 2006:

Winter Teacher Planning and Holistic 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.

Note: eZine is posted at:

http://www.classroomtoolkit.com/support-files/volume-1_number-1.pdf

* We now have 42 subscribers, so we have to work out the E-mail
delivery, it is too tedious to complete by hand

-> Results <-

Our page ranks in the search engines continues to fluctuate, and
our traffic rank has regained most of its highest level:

* We reached over 1,500 visitors for the month of March

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

-> Our Latest Strategy <-

We are still too busy to prospect for local teachers who are willing to help.

-> 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 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 <-

But daily messages are the easiest method of impacting all your students.

But, don't start this strategy if you think you can fake your caring.

Students see though "fake" as transparently as you see the motives of a used car salesperson.

Don't forget, children that are pretending to be tough and invulnerable are children with a heart. They are pretending to be cold and uncaring. They are hurting children pretending that, no matter what, they can't be hurt.

The quiet, nice, semi-smiling students may also be putting on a front, begging to please; but hiding the family's divorce, abuse, or their own everybody-is-too-busy-to-notice-or-care-for-me desperation.

You can't dent children's defenses by talking and reason alone. Their borders and walls repulse any of your advances, whether their walls are barbed and razor wire fences or put-on-a-happy-face of smoke and mirrors barriers.

Try to get too close to their castle, and the tough kids will pour boiling oil on you from the ramparts. The soft kids will just relocate their castle over the next ridge, out of sight.

But, you can get through to your students, and you don't need to take a big time slice out of your school day to do it. Of course you won't be able to take any credit for your contribution to their lives, either.

But, you dedicate yourself to helping children, not taking credit so this is OK.

The reason that you won't be able to take credit is because you will be sharing positive suggestions that are imbedded in your daily message. Your students won't realize what you are doing for them.

But, there are some parameters that you need to consider, otherwise, your attempt will become inane, useless and ignored.

What you do is phrase your daily messages as a kind of hypnotic language.

Not that you want to place students into a trance. (You want them to be talking and communicating, not silent.)

You want your daily message to get through their defenses and find fertile ground...something like planting flower seeds in the garden of their unconscious minds.

To do this, you have to phrase your suggestions in a way that their conscious minds cannot reject.

This means that your messages must be true on the surface.

For example, "You are geniuses who easily pass the high-stakes test," will be automatically rejected because it is blatantly false.

Another non-functional example: "Everyone you meet is here to help you celebrate the you that you are."

Or, another results-challenged message: "Being good for good's sake is one of life's tender rewards."

Effective daily messages will generally be longer than ineffective messages, and contain several convoluted phrases. The twisted logic of the message is what gives the message its penetration power.

It is also useful to cover several of the Multiple Intelligences (multisensory words) as part of the message.

Here is how to put one of these messages together...

Start as a process, not a fact.

Example:

1.) Add a hard-to-argue-against Process:

As you see, or hear, feel or sense the thoughts behind the words of this message,

2.) Add another hard-to-argue-against process:

you may be pleasantly surprised to discover, in your own way,

Payload:

that a certain positive message that somehow captivates your attention

brings a certain benefit

Distractor:

for you, and just for you.

Explanation:

As their minds try to ward off the message of the first process phrase, you provide a second process phrase that is equally difficult to unravel.

While the students' conscious mind is struggling with these two process phrases, you deliver the positive message, and end with a distractor question that is not in question form, i.e., "How can this message be for me, let alone just for me?"

Good starting words for these messages:

- * As
- * We
- * When
- * Like

Another example:

1.) Add a hard-to-argue-against Process:

We know that in between the thought of what we wish we had said, or what we wish that we hadn't said;

2.) Add another hard-to-argue-against process:

that the echos, images and pulls of the mind remind us of the capacity of our mind

Payload:

to bring a special kind of closure and a special kind of positive learning to our lives,

Distractor:

just now, just so, so, it is so, isn't it?

Third example:

1.) Add a hard-to-argue-against Process:

When the words that you wish were said become pictures, feelings and actions,

2.) Add another hard-to-argue-against process:

your inside thoughts can change for the better, in just their own way, because they come from the you that is you,

Payload:

so certain positive outcomes occur for you, in ways that you might not have predicted,

Distractor:

can they not?

If you get to say, repeat, communicate these daily messages to your students (instead of writing them), you can increase the impact by saying these messages in a special tone of voice. A tone of voice that you reserve for delivering suggestions.

This is done by slurring your words together, so that it is more difficult to tell where one phrase ends and another begins.

This increases the difficulty of the conscious mind to handle the objections in its normal defensive patterns.

It is also useful to choose a visual clue (such as a hand gesture) and move your hand consistently, maybe up and down to, maybe side to side) in time to your breathing.

Reserve this visual clue and only use it for delivering your messages. So, make the clue unique enough that you don't unconsciously use the gesture, but similar enough to your typical gestures that it won't seem unnatural.

At first, you will probably plan and map your daily messages out on paper, but after a while, you will be able to create these "on the fly."

But, start the day, or start the class with a message and make this

You can buy Surfulator(TM) for only \$35, and you can download a trial version first to see if it fulfills your needs.

InfoSelect(TM) collects vast amounts of information, and allows you to search the entire database for individual words. If you work with text in your research, InfoSelect(TM) is a valuable tool.

However, Surfulator(TM) does some tricks that make collecting Web information easier. It...

- * Captures whole Web pages
- * Captures images
- * Captures page content

Then, you can use the built in search to find the information that you have collected.

Another trick that beats InfoSelect(TM)...

Surfulator(TM) can capture the text information from a Web site, and automatically captures the link address.

This feature cuts research time in half, i.e., one step instead of two steps.

InfoSelect(TM) is my bread and butter research tool, but not many teachers will be able to find \$250 for the program. (I purchased InfoSelect(TM) years ago, at a much lower price, and I have kept the product updated all these years.

But, teachers don't live in a text-only world, and they can use Surfulator(TM)'s graphic capture features to gather lesson research.

-> Where to get your copy <-

Download Surfulator at:

<http://surfulater.com/download.html>

->Free resources<-

Clever Keys

CleverKeys is free software that provides instant access to

- * Definitions at Dictionary.com
- * Synonyms at Thesaurus.com
- * Facts at Reference.com
- * and more

Works with almost all Windows(TM) or Mac(TM) programs

- * Word processors
- * Web browsers
- * E-mail programs. With CleverKeys, the answers are just a click away.

Learn more, or download CleverKeys for free now!

<http://www.cleverkeys.com/ck.html?p=download&os=>

Note: You have to be connected to the internet to use this program.

Also, the company wants \$20US to allow you to hear the sound of the word being spoken, and to provide the word lookup service without ads.

Still, this seems like a great additon for classroom computers or computer labs.

I am not sure that you would want to use it if you connect to the Internet at home through a dial up connection.

->Teacher Resources<-

<http://www.free-ed.net>

It is becoming harder and more tedious to find sources for this section of our Newsletter. Finding this selection took about 3 1/2 or 4 hours.

But, I'm sure that you will find this gem of a site worth your while.

Here is what the site offers:

- * Free education on the Internet
- * No books to buy, no hidden fees
- * Courses, tutorials, and skill-building activities

Some of the courses offer entire, free, online books.

Here is a selection of course categories (from the site catalog):

- * GED & College Prep
 - Prepare for your GED and get ready for a successful college career.
- * Health Care
 - Anatomy and physiology, medical terminology, dental assisting, nursing...
- * Information Technology
 - Computer programming, databases, office applications...
- * Business, Marketing, and Economics
 - Management, entrepreneurship, sales, economics...
- * Building & Construction
 - Building construction, plumbing, electrical, masonry...
- * Electronics
 - Basic DC/AC electronics, digital, Endless Examples and Exercises™ ...
- * Mathematics
 - It's all here, from basic arithmetic through calculus and differential equations.
- * Science
 - Astronomy, physics, earth sciences...

Check this site out in your spare time. :-)

->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 <-

If someone Recruits you for a Looping Class Assignment...Duck out and Run for Cover!

Looping is the practice of keeping students with the same teacher for more than one year, particularly during the first elementary school grades.

Some district administrators have touted this practice as a new method for increasing learning outcomes.

But, did anyone stop to test the practice?

A faculty member at PennState's College of Education just did.

The results: No testable improvement:

"The researchers found that, after the two-year period, looping did not have any significant effect on the students' reading and math achievement, learning behaviors, or attendance rates."

<http://www.ed.psu.edu/news/looping.asp>

Of course, advocates will say that this controlled study was too small. Only one set of matched class.

But, we're not surprised.

Manipulating teacher assignment variables, but not changing the correct independent variable...improved instructional strategies and increased funding support for teachers.

Looping is in effect, providing the same instruction but spinning the rhetoric about the program as though something really was different, i.e., better.

Here is what the study's lead investigator had to say.

"With federal legislation such as NCLB, school districts are under substantial pressure to show improvement in their students' academic functioning," she said. "Not surprisingly, many are adopting new programs to address this need. Unfortunately, many of the programs selected have failed to demonstrate sufficient empirical evidence to support their use."

Dr. Barbara Schaefer, Associate Professor of Educational & School Psychology

<http://www.ed.psu.edu/news/looping.asp>

This seems to be similar to the Benchmarking Craze that we identified in a previous newsletter. "The Flaws, Fallacies and Foolishness of

Publisher: Staten Island, NY: Aysa Publishing

Pages: 141

Cost: \$16.95 (List)

Available: Amazon at as low as \$1.90
eBay(TM) for as low as \$2.95.

The Books' Topics:

This book is a basic how-to text for organizing a secondary school classroom.

That secondary teaching can be bleak in New York City is best communicated by this classroom materials list.

In the teacher's desk:

- "a. a box of chalk
 - b. an extra board eraser
 - c. rubber bands of different sizes
 - d. a writing pad
 - e. note paper (3" x 5") [sic]
 - f. paper clips
 - g. a stapler and staples
 - h. extra pencils and pens (several red and green)
 - i. a ruler
 - j. scotch [sic] tape
 - k. thumb tacks"
- (p. - 19)

In the closet:

- "a. a ream of 8 1/2" x 11" white lined paper
 - b. " " " " " unlined paper
 - c. a variety of colored unlined paper to be used for decorative backgrounds on bulletin boards
 - d. several sheets of white oak tag
 - e. short 5" x 7 " paper to be used for short quizzes
 - f. a class set of pencils
 - g. a set of blank Scantron forms if your school has a Scantron marking machine
 - h. overhead projector transparencies and appropriate writing pens"
- (p. - 19)

"It is not imperative that all the above be in your closet

on opening day. Eventually, have these resources available so that you don't need to become frantic when some items are unexpectedly needed. (p. - 19)

Rather than a "Blackboard Jungle," the resources of this classroom seem arid like a "Blackboard Desert."

The central themes of this book are:

- * Organized teachers have an easier time managing their classes
- * Planning for the year provides a framework for flexibility
- * Organizing and planning is the only refuge that teachers have when facing tough, street wise students
- * Organizing procedures that are as sparse as the classroom can be effective
- * Instructional methods and activities must be varied to hold students' attention
- * The homework framework for the year should be mapped out and presented to the students on the first day

Keywords:

- * Planning
- * Organizing
- * Managing
- * Evaluation

Main Idea:

Tough, street-wise students will over run a teacher that is not prepared.

However, the teacher that is prepared can do the job with a minimal skill set, and very basic tools.

Quotes:

"The majority of novice teachers enter their first classroom encounter armed with methodology from various sources. This often creates for the teacher a state of mind best described, as one of confusion. In some cases inept and uncaring supervisors place a new teacher into a lion's den believing that he/she will learn the art of instruction along the way. [sic] (p. -25)

"The new teacher is given token information, the basic

necessities for getting his/her classes underway, and then cast into an arena comparable to an ordeal under fire." [sic] (p. - 25)

"Once you have "routinized" your steps, youngsters will come to view you as an efficient leader of "their classroom." The so-called "teaching battle" is half won at this point." (p. - 29)

"A well prepared lesson plan, with all its necessary components is like having a master-teacher with you in class." (p. -37)

"The novice teacher is advised that questioning technique will not be mastered in a day, week, or month. Good questioning technique develops with continuous classroom exposure." (p. - 50)

Issues Addressed by the Book:

Harvey Kraut explores the "rock bottom basics" in this book. For example, there is an entire chapter (Chapter 3) devoted to building, coding and maintaining a grade book.

Basics that are explored include:

- * How-to and what not to do of asking questions
- * How-to of varying the kind of lesson format
- * Models for cooperative learning

The Book's Shortcomings:

If it were not for the mention of the computer and the Internet (in later chapters), it would be easy to believe that this book was written in the 1950s.

For an experienced teacher, it is difficult to believe that a new teacher doesn't know this stuff.

But, in point of fact, the new teacher probably doesn't know how to do these things.

Another shortcoming: Mr. Kraut doesn't complain about a bleak classroom with limited materials. He accepts this as matter of fact.

He seems content to decorate the one bulletin board with

free posters that he finds from embassies, chemical companies or other sources.

He does recommend posting the best work of every student at least once per school year.

Comments:

This book is short and easy to read. You can use the ideas that the author presents.

This author recommends some of the same basic strategies as Classroom Toolkit, but arrives at them from a different vantage point.

Points of similarity:

- * Planning for the year
- * Cooperative group project
- * Focus upon higher-order thinking
- * Collaborative group activities
- * Establishing routines to save time
- * Consistent and fair discipline
- * Modularized instructional strategy
- * Use of mind maps

Who would believe that a traditional teacher would prescribe procedures that are so close to modern methods.

Summary:

Here is a summary of the types of lessons that Harvey Kraut suggests that a teacher develops for their repertoire.

- * Open Book
 - Teacher directed or student group work
 - Talking permitted
 - Teacher becomes a resource
 - Followed by question and answer session
 - Final summary outlined on chalkboard
- * Role Playing
 - Can be used in any subjects
 - Final activity: students write their observations
 - Reading of several students' papers, discussion and summary

- * Classroom Debate
 - Focus upon higher-order thought
 - Initial question
 - Teacher reassures students about public speaking
 - Either teacher or students act as debate moderator
 - Students take notes
 - Question and answer for debate members or summary
 - Possible follow up in subsequent class with writing or quiz

- * Cooperative Learning
 - Groups (operating as committees) compete against other groups
 - Teacher tests individual committee members
 - Team score is the average of all members contributions

- * Committee Project
 - Differs from Cooperative Learning in that group meets for about twice a week for two weeks
 - Final reports are delivered
 - Class records notes using the Graphic Organizer to catalog what they learned

- * Visual and Audio Aids
 - Use of television, VCR and other materials
 - Teacher previews and creates questions from the media
 - Stop to conduct class discussion
 - Summary and Review of media

- * Primary and Secondary Sources (Evaluation)
 - Teacher prepares a handout of the selection
 - Vocabulary and definitions are included
 - Key concepts are highlighted
 - Important questions are the focus of the inquiry
 - Final summary

- * School Library Lesson
 - Communicate date, time and objectives with librarian
 - Prepare students for library visit
 - Teacher prepares a "motivation sheet" for students
 - Follow up after returning to class

- * Computer Lab Lesson
 - Procedures similar to Library Lesson above

- * Pre-test Review Lesson
 - Teacher designs all manner of interesting ways

- to review for the tests and quizzes
- Review can be a game or contest
- Another strategy is to build a mind map of each topic with group contribution of the main points (p. - 55 to 68)

Rating (Four Point scale):

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

- Overall Rating 3.0

==*==*==*==*==*==*==*==*==* REQUESTS ==*==*==*==*==*==*==*==*==*

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-> Requests <-

What would you like to see in this newsletter?

Send your requests for future articles to:

requests-svbi@classroomtoolkit.com

==*==*==*==*==*==*==*==*==* FEEDBACK ==*==*==*==*==*==*==*==*==*

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Site or Newsletter Feedback:

Send feedback and suggestions to:

feedback-svbi@classroomtoolkit.com

==*==*==*==*==*==*==*==*==* ARTICLE PREVIEW ==*==*==*==*==*==*==*==*==*

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-> Article Preview <-

The Stripes, Spots, and Yellow Streaks of School
District Stakeholders

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>

==*==

Note: eZine is posted at:

http://www.classroomtoolkit.com/support-files/volume-1_number-1.pdf

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<http://www.classroomtoolkit.com>

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