GCS

# Professional Development Newsletter

Volume 2, Issue 3 January, 2009

Guilford County Schools
STRIVING. ACHIEVING. EXCELLING.

## GCS-PROFDEV: Proactive Practices for Today´s Classroom - 071122

This course will provide educators with specific information and techniques to assist in the creation of a more cohesive and manageable classroom. Explicit management strategies will focus upon building teacher skill sets in resolving classroom conflict, building relationships, and increasing student engagement.

http://www.solutionwhere.com/guilford/cw/showcourse.asp?1941

## GCS-PROFDEV: Unique Strategies to Instruct & Motivate Elementary Boys - 070102

Based on brain function research, boys learn differently than girls and certain instructional strategies are more conducive to learning in males.

As a result of this course, participants will gain a practical understanding of the special issues of teaching boys and take home strategies for creating boy friendly classrooms.

http://www.solutionwhere.com/guilford/cw/showcourse.asp?1493

## Creating an Inviting Classroom Environment

### Did you know?

Research shows that when teachers model interpersonal concern, nurture student autonomy and self-direction, encourage student thinking, and facilitate student collaboration, they encourage the development of a sense of community in their classrooms (Martinez, Perez, & Cook, 1998).

Students' perceptions of a supportive, caring relationship with a teacher and a positive classroom climate are related to school satisfaction by as early as third grade (Wentzel, 1997).

Research shows that teachers who are taught to provide support and warmth, developmentally appropriate autonomy, and clear expectations for behavior allow students to develop a greater sense of community, improve academic achievement, and display more socially competent behavior (Schaps, Battisitich, & Solomon, 1997).

"A teacher's ability to relate to students and to make positive, caring connections with them plays a significant role in cultivating a positive learning environment and promoting student achievement."
–James H. Stronge
Author of *Qualities of Effective Teachers*

Performance Learning PLUS is a monthly e-newsletter by Performance Learning Systems (PLS), a comprehensive educational services company that has provided a full spectrum of programs, products, and consulting services to educators and business professionals since 1971. When students enter your classroom each day,

they want to feel comfortable and accepted by you as well as other students in the classroom. Read on for ways to CREATE AN INVITING CLASSROOM CLIMATE that fosters opportunities for learning.

## TIPS:

The following strategies help teachers create an inviting, respectful, and supportive classroom climate.

## 1. PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS TO LEARN AND WORK TOGETHER.

Heterogeneous groups can help students develop relationships across gender, racial, and ethnic boundaries as well as integrate students with disabilities. To ensure success, be sure that students know what size the groups should be, what procedures they need to follow, and what behaviors are expected. Students will value the opportunity to learn and work together if there is some flexibility and fun in grouping as outlined below.

- **Vary Group Size --** Vary the group size depending upon the task. Some activities may be best carried out in small groups of three or four while other activities work better with a larger group of five or six. You can establish various sizes for groups at the beginning of the year and use those groups all year long. For instance, form groups of three and refer to them as the "triangle" groups. Any time you want students to work in groups of three, tell them to meet with their triangle groups. The "square" group always has the same four members, the "stop sign" group always has the same eight members, and so on.

- **Build Group Identities** --Another idea is to have each group give itself a name to foster an identity for the group. Provide a way for students to get to know one another in their groups, such as having them find out three things they all have in common, then giving themselves a name that reflects their identity.

## 2. CREATE SPECIAL TRADITIONS FOR YOUR CLASSROOM.

Traditions help students make an emotional connection to the class, prompt positive feelings, and provide a sense of belonging to the group. Classroom traditions include activities and experiences that are unique to the class, known to everyone in the class, and repeated over time.

Make up responses and songs that work best for your class. Your classroom climate will be more inviting if students are encouraged to participate in making up the words as a group. Or let small groups come up with their own opening traditions and take turns leading the class with an Opening Tradition.

- **Start Each Day with an Opening Tradition**
  Begin each day with the same song or opening choral response. Here is an example:
  Teacher: How do you feel?
  Students: Awake and ready!
  Teacher: How do you feel?
  Students: Positive, energetic, and enthusiastic!
  Teacher: Are you ready for class?
  Students: Yes! Yes! Yes!

- **End Each Day with a Closing Tradition**
  End each day with an unfinished sentence for students to complete: "I enjoyed…" "I learned…" "I want to find more out about…" You can implement a few types of Closing Traditions, such as journaling with the unfinished sentence as a starter, having small groups finish and share their sentences, asking groups or individuals to create posters of what they learned that day, etc. You may choose to have a different Closing Tradition each day of the week. For instance, Monday is journaling day, Tuesday is poster day, and so on.

- **Share a Story**
  Read a story related to content as a way for students to unwind and make their own connections to the content. Another option is for you to choose the story on Monday, and have individual students or small groups find or make up stories to read the rest of the week.

### 3. USE CELEBRATIONS TO ACKNOWLEDGE LARGE AND SMALL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Celebrations can be used to acknowledge students' efforts and achievements as well as to recognize their perseverance. Celebrations need not require a lot of time or preparation to do; they can be quick and spontaneous. The element of fun that celebrations bring to the classroom helps to create a supportive climate. You can also have groups come up with their own celebrations to promote identity and connections.

- **The Silent Cheer**
  Have students wave their arms around excitedly and "shout" with no sound coming out of anyone's mouth.

- **The Magic Touch**
  Have students touch an index finger to another person's index finger while saying "YYYeeessss!"

- **A "Round" of Applause**
  Have students move their arms around in a large circular motion while clapping their hands. Next they can try a "square," "triangle," or "rectangle" of applause. These celebrations can work particularly well if you establish "triangle" groups, "square" groups, etc. as suggested above. The groups can celebrate by "clapping" their shape.

Source: The above strategies are based on the PLS graduate course Classroom Management: Orchestrating a Community of Learners™. For more information, see helpful resources below.

### Reference:


Martinez, M., Perez, B., & Cook, G (1998). Key dimensions of school life. *Primary Voices K-6,* 6(1) , 3-9.

Schaps, E., Battisitich, V., & Solomon, D. (1997). *Ninety-sixth yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education (pp. 127-139).* : School as a caring community: A key to character education. In A. Molnar (Ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Wentzel, K. R. (1997). Student motivation in middle school: The role of perceived pedagogical caring . *Journal of Educational Psychology,* 89 , 411-417.


## Establishing and Maintaining the Tone of Your Classroom

…Article by Lady Lit
Published on Nov 26, 2008

Establishing a positive classroom environment immediately is extremely important as it sets the tone for the remainder of the school year—it sets the teacher's expectations with regard to discipline. Students know what is expected of them, and in turn, students are less likely to bestow surprises on teachers.

## The First Step

The first step is to greet students as they enter your classroom door. This is important for a number of reasons, but teachers must remember that students have feelings. Also, this is one of those little things that teach students good manners. Students tend to be impressionable, and they learn what behaviors are appropriate by watching adults interact with students as well as fellow teachers.

## Model Exemplary Behavior

If teachers ignore their students as they enter the classroom, students learn that it is acceptable and appropriate to not greet individuals. In other words, as a teacher, you are a very influential person; a teacher is a role model. Thus, it is important for teachers to model acceptable behavior at all times, both on campus and off campus.

## Welcome Your Students

When the bell rings, walk in and say "Good Morning/Afternoon, or whatever greeting is appropriate. Make your students feel as if they belong in your class and that they are welcomed. Teachers must remember that without their students, they would not have jobs.

## Maintain the Tone

One you establish the tone in your classroom, it is imperative to maintain the tone. Maintaining the tone is established by having a simple routine. If a teacher does bell work, make sure that students know where to pick up their assignments. Each day the students enter the teacher's classroom, they will know exactly what to do and how to go about it.

Perform the same routine day after day. Not only do students know what to expect, it frees up the teacher's time to call roll, tie up loose ends, and prepare for the day's lesson. The biggest part is there will be minimal, if any, disruptions. Most teachers will agree that the fewer disruptions they have in their classroom, the better their day is.

## More From Classroom Management

Classroom Management: Rough Starts and Starting Over

Classroom Coaching

Don't Knock the Coaches

Quarreling Children: Your Options Explained

## Holocaust Teacher Workshops, 2008-2009

**Focus:** These one-day, multi-county workshops for public school teachers of social studies and English/Language Arts present Dr. Karl Schleunes, historian and Holocaust scholar, and Gizella Abramson, a Holocaust survivor of the Majdanek death camp who recounts her experiences in a concentration camp or Zohara Boyd, a survivor who "hid in plain sight" during the Holocaust . Participants receive a copy of *The Holocaust: a North Carolina Teacher's Resource*, a guide for teaching about the Holocaust at the middle and high school levels. This workshop is open to language arts and social studies teachers from all parts of the state teaching in middle schools or high schools and is particularly useful for teachers of World History or American History as well as teachers at the sixth-grade level teaching Eastern European history. It is also recommended for middle school language arts teachers teaching *Anne Frank's Diary* or high school English teachers studying Elie Wiesel's *Night* and other Holocaust literature at the upper grades. Substitute pay is provided for teachers attending, but space is limited and teachers are encouraged to make early contact with Linda Scher, Holocaust Teacher Workshop Coordinator. These workshops are free and open to teachers from all parts of the state in the 2008-2009 school year. Substitute pay will be provided by the sponsoring workshop for all public school teachers attending the workshops.

| | |
|---|---|
| Newton, Catawba County | February 4 |
| Durham, Durham County | February 18 |
| Fayetteville, Cumberland County | February 23 |
| Monroe, Union County | February 27 |
| Greensboro, Guilford County | March 4 |
| WRESA Enka, Buncombe County | March 25 |

For additional information and registration, e-mail Linda Scher at Brisket234@aol.com

Professional Development Staff
501 W Washington Street
Greensboro, NC 27401

Martha Snavely, Executive Director

Randy Shiflett, 312-3930
Rick Cobb, 378-8811
Pam Embler, 317-3177
Connie Hicks, 370-3279
Information,: 370-8010