

Monday, July 31, 2006

News Nuggets

Texas Strategy for Solving the "Poor Kids' Obesity Problem" | "Don't Feed them During the Summer"
The San Antonio Express News (tree-based news), July 16, 2006, Pages 3B and 7B alerted me to this strategy. This newspaper column cites a study by the Food Research and Action Center entitled, "No Texas child deserves to go hungry." It turns out that Texas leads the nation in applying this strategy, to the tune of \$32.3 million US! This is the amount of federal money that Texas did not collect because eligible children from low income homes were not fed.

Texas left almost as much money on the table (no pun intended) as the next five states combined!

Amount not claimed for feeding low income children by just six states - \$77.3 million US

And, this is not calculated at swanky-restaurant (the kind that teachers frequent, where a tuxedo-clad valet parks the teacher's BMW) prices. This was calculated on US Department of Agriculture (USDA) provided food prices. This is food sold to schools at below wholesale prices, i.e., commodity food purchased by our government to keep the prices that we pay at the supermarket high; food sold at lower than market prices so that between ten to twenty children could eat lunch for the price that an affluent teacher might pay for one mediocre bottle of wine at said upscale eatery. This represents a lot of missed meals for poor children...a really lot of meals.

And, we're only talking about one, no-charge meal a day for these children.

The Texas Success Story

In Texas, only about 19% of the low income children that could have been fed (were eligible for the program), were fed. Sure, Texas kids are among the heaviest in the nation.

But, feeding children nutritious food each day keeps their weight down.

Placing children on a "no food available" diet, just causes them to "pack on pounds" once they get food again. Everyone knows that dieting does not work as a weight management solution.

So, Why isn't Texas Feeding its Children at Federal Expense?

"The reason Texas has fallen behind other states, according to the study's authors, is that people either aren't aware the program exists or lack transportation to a site. Also some communities don't have available sites or have limited hours.

Last year, 76 (Texas) counties did not have a summermeal program. Source: San Antonio Express News, 7-16-06, Study says state lost funds when kids missed free lunches, p-7b.

"I'm not sure why there's low participation in the program. Maybe people don't know about it, but we don't have money to do the big mega advertising...We advertise it as much as we can by sending press releases, sending letters home and posting flyers, but our funds are limited." Source: San Antonio Express News, 7-16-06, Study says state lost funds when kids missed free lunches, p-7b.

Commentary

Aren't the same people that let all these children go unfed the same ones that demand increased teacher accountability, and the same ones who demand increased test scores?

And, aren't these summer feeding programs also required by law for districts with large numbers of students who receive free meals during the school year?

And wasn't outrage expressed about the obesity problem in our country? (Surprisingly, teachers were not blamed for the obesity problem. But, teachers should find a way to integrate nutritional skills into the on going curriculum, shouldn't they?)

But, there is still time for politicians to add requirements for the No Child Left Behind Law (NCLB).

"Whipping Boy" is not a Brand of Cream

Is there a parallel to the "whipping boy" concept here? That is, when the royal children misbehaved; because they couldn't be spanked, a substitute was called in to receive the beating.

One of the rules of "Blatant Bureaucracy" is, "Blame flows down the chain of command hierarchy" rests firmly on the shoulders, backs, backsides; of the lowest level employees. (This is the reason that they call it a "flow chart."

Guess where stuff flows where teachers are concerned.

There is no such thing as a free lunch!

Perhaps Texas school administrators would like to prove the adage: "There is no such thing as a free lunch."

But, this is misguided because the cost of the "free lunch" should be picked up by the poor kids' rich Uncle, Sam.

Since this situation demonstrates mismanagement, if not downright law breaking, do you want to start a nation-wide protest. How about making this protest so loud that it drowns out the

Only this time, it won't be teachers tootsies that get roasted if those responsible have their feet held to the fire.

Link to the Hunger Doesn't Take a Vacation Report (PDF Format)

Link to the Food Research and Action Center site

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in News Nuggets at 11:00

Short Article

Change Equals Stress: Adjusting to your New Job

Preparing physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually for new job can limit the stress that is associated with the change. Change, even positive, exciting, beneficial, seizing-a-great-opportunity change creates an environment of stress.

And, if there were storm clouds brewing, alligator-filled swamps boiling, backstabbing cutthroats plotting, or don't get it bosses at the old site; the "nervousness" might be stronger than if the last job experience had been happy.

Making Change Profitable

The key to a smooth transition, or a "hit the ground running" strategy is preparation.

Here are some things that you can do...

Set new habits quickly

One stressor is making adjustments

Set new routines and stick to them, even if "tweaking" might be more efficient

The new routines can be streamlined later, once you settle in to your new environment

Learn all you can about the new job situation

Talk to the new "boss"

Visit with colleagues and neighbors

Explore by walking around, even aimlessly

Familiarizing, not memorizing is the key

Your internal mental processing will organize and develop internal maps more quickly if you provide lots of sensory information (that you acquire by exploring)

Find a friend/ buddy/ mentor

Grab "insider information" because this is the "fast track" to

But, learn who you can trust

Trust your intuition

If you feel, sense, intuit that you should not trust someone, keep a clear path away from them

Keep in touch with friends, neighbors and colleagues from the last job or neighborhood

Talk to your New Boss

Your job here is to establish rapport

This does not mean "impressing" your new boss, unless you want to impress your boss with your listening skills

Pay conscious attention to what your boss says and does, but your job is really to acquire unconscious information that will help you in the supervisory relationship over the long run

Make the First Move in Making Friends

Most people you meet are glad to help

Most people don't want to seem to be pushy or meddlesome

You overcome their

Volunteer for something that will keep you in touch with your new colleagues or new neighbors

Make the new environment as "homey" as possible

Pictures, posters, old bulletin boards are all soothing at the unconscious level

Unless the old situation was really terrible, bring a few mementoes to the new location

Feel free to ask for help during your transition to your new job, and you will find lots of new friends and colleagues who are happy to help.

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Short Article at 10:00

Feature Article

Professional Development: Fast-Track to Empowerment or an Energy-Sapping Seat-Time Rut

By whatever name or disguise, professional development, In-service, staff development or training, this seat-time ritual is ubiquitous in school districts at the start of each and every school year. Every year starts with a required, mandated, placebo-dose of this bad-tasting medicine.

These seat-time endurance extravaganzas are the one time of the year when all but the most comatose of the educational consultancy corps are employed (deployed).

In theory, the funds expended for this ordeal result in targeted change and trackable/ traceable teacher improvements that focus upon directly-measured student outcomes.

So, why are the collective benefits from this "feedlot-style" professional development less than ideal? Examples?

For example, during the In-service program on individualized or differentiated instruction, the presenter models a one-size-bores-all system that is fully described in the consultant's 368 page book. Of course, after the \$1,200 US consultant fee for delivering the presentation (the consultant is a published author, you know), the campus cannot afford the \$34 US book for each teacher. Fortunately, the the consultant was generous enough to donate a used copy for the campus library.

Fortunately, the copy is always available for checkout, since no teacher has time to slog through this ponderous tome. In another "Sleeper Cell" presentation, the technology consultant flashes PowerPoint slides for six hours.

Fortunately, the purchase orders have been "cut," and the software that the consultant is "teaching" will be ordered as soon as the new fiscal year begins. The teachers will remember remarkable amounts about the concept behind the software when the software arrives (ninety days after the start of the fiscal year), and they will still remember a lot after the IT Department schedules the software for installation (six weeks into the next semester).

But, entering "back-dated-data" into the software seems too odious, oppressive, repulsive and stressful; so, none of the teachers who were "trained" bothers to use the software. Maybe the software can be salvaged for use next year...but only if funds for the software's maintenance fees are budgeted.

However, there is little sense in my droning on with these endless examples. Everyone has seen, first hand, endless renditions and iterations of these well-known scenarios. Pressing on would be just plain boring, or, would prompt you to think of worse-outcome "horror" stories that you have seen that could easily trump my examples.

Telling it Like it is

So, what describes ("Tells it like it is") this well-known "Curse of the Never Quite Alive" professional development ritual that replicates itself, year after year?

In theory, professional development should fit one of these professional models, even though each model offers issues, concerns and obstacles to be overcome.

Of course, there is only enough money in the professional development budget for one-off training.

Follow up, follow through, action plans, application of any valuable nuggets of knowledge is...

Impractical

Too time consuming

Too low a priority

A waste of time

Wait a minute...

...What teacher has the time?

...What valuable knowledge nuggets?

Low-Impact, Intensive Training A limited professional development budget is responsible for a large percentage of training sessions that start with the following dialogue...

The presenter introduces the topic by saying that the information that he or she is presenting is really a "three-day, week-long, three-week" class. So, the best that he or she will be able to accomplish is to "hit the highlights."

Translation: All that is going to happen is that presenter is going to sling slides and read bullet points.

These initial words, coupled with a quick slide (no pun intended) into the "PowerPoint Daze" results in a rapid transport of the audience into an altered state of awareness. The primary characteristic of this training-trance is a post-hypnotic suggestion that blocks all memory of the contents of the session, or, at least recall is blocked for the remainder of the school year.

I am not sure if any controlled experiments have been conducted to study this phenomena, but my hypothesis is that less than 1 in 56, 287 teachers who attend one of these workshops will be able to state (at the end of the school year, with 10 degrees of freedom) what the training was about.

But, if so few participants can recall one major point that was presented during the previous day's workshop; shouldn't some Business Office Purse-Protector squawk, and ask what the goals of these professional development training programs are?

I believe that it is OK for expenditure-hawks to raise these questions because, after over one quarter of a century of observing these start-of-school professional development rituals; I ask the same questions, too.

The goals of a genuine staff development program must include:

A way to apply the attitude, skill and knowledge so that these become habits

A way to maintain the attitude, skills and knowledge so that the learning doesn't fade

A way to improve the attitude, skills and knowledge once the foundation is set

Institutional support (and reward) for the improvements in attitude, skill and knowledge that were acquired

Empowerment of staff members so that they can do whatever it takes to implement the learned attitude, skill and knowledge for the benefit of students

And, during the training, professional interaction with the course content should include:

Participation

Collaboration

Practice

Reflection

Action Planning

Follow Up Planning

The litmus test for hiring training consultants is to determine if they can apply, analyze and synthesize the following:

The Basic Characteristics of Adult Learning

The Ability to Model Every Single Thing that they are Teaching

Real-World Experience in Delivering Instruction to Real Students related to the Class they are Teaching

Active Learning

Project-Based Learning

Action Planning

Application Follow Up

Follow Up Tracking

Follow Up Evaluation

The consultant's academic degrees have a correlation of "Zero" with actual benefits to students that develop from these opening of school training programs.

Translation: 1.) Students would probably benefit just as much if staff members ate popcorn and watched movies. 2.)

Students would probably benefit more if their teachers designed and constructed bulletin boards in their classrooms with curriculum-related decorations.

Delivering what Teachers Want Teachers are adults and have no interest in re-experiencing the "whole-body" learning of what it is like to sit in one seat for an entire day. Teachers' backsides are no longer conditioned to this abuse since they graduated (escaped).

But, students backsides are miniscule compared to the size of the terrain that pain has available in its romp across the rump of adults; and teachers do not need to be reminded of the fact that petite rhymes with seat, or that pain rhymes with gain.

Summary Effective use of this mandatory professional development time hinges upon the ability of the presenter to turn the corner from an emphasis on teaching (the consultant's) to an emphasis on learning (the staff participants').

The most important characteristic of any program that stands any chance at all of being useful is a change of focus from disseminating knowledge to that of applying, synthesizing and evaluating performance and change.

However, in the case of most consultant presenters, although talk may not come cheap, it is next to useless...unless, of course, the talk is embedded in active, life-changing, habit changing, able-to-apply something tomorrow, and the next day, and the next action plans that are on target for each teacher's needs.

If anyone encounters a truly useful professional development experience this year, please tell up about it. We will be sure to publicize the experience and celebrate the memorable event with you.

But alas, we expect that useful professional development experiences will be as rare as teachers who like and appreciate the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) for all the benefits that the law brings to children.

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Featured Article at 09:00

Quick Tips

Summer Spruce-up: Scour, Scrub, Sift-through and "Sanitize" your Stuff

Summer time is prep time for the upcoming school year.

Wouldn't it be great if you faced the year unafraid?

Well, you might not fear your mess, but, clutter drains your energy.

And, clutter builds stress. Especially when you are looking for something that is very important. The "TASK CAN" is the Trash Can

The trash can is one of your greatest allies in your campaign to snuff-out clutter.

Actually, you may need large trash bags, or, even the super-sized, puncture-proof Lawn and Leaf bags.

But, why does clutter and mess create stress?

And, doesn't this stress only affect "Neat Freaks?"

Too bad...but, the answer is, "No." Clutter affects everyone, and you work with more energy when your working area is clean.

Do as I say, Not as I do

How many teachers ask students to keep a clean desk, and nurture a trash heap of their own?

If this describes you, it is time to shape up and "fly light."

You need a System

If you are going to move, you throw out lots of stuff, and you hold a garage/ yard sale. There is no sense moving the junk, then throwing it out when you arrive at your new home. (At least in theory we say that we believe this.)

Start early, start now; so you have time to sort.

Here is the strategy that you need...

Throw out everything, even stuff that you are 80% sure that you might need. Hint: you never will use it, anyway

Set up a filing/ storage system. You never will have enough room, so throw out some other stuff for good measure

Spend a little time each day keeping this system going

Ruthless and Systematic "Junk-Toss"

Thinking..."I might need this someday, I better keep it." is self-deception.

The correct question is: "Can I name the specific situation where I will need this?" If not, toss it.

Still holding on to it? Ask: "What is the worst thing that could happen if I didn't have this?" If "worse" isn't so bad, toss it.

Filing/ Storage System Woes

Some studies show that we never look at 80% of the things that we file. For some of us, the number approaches 99.99% if we have such a disorganized system that we can't find what we are looking for.

The corollary to this situation is, trying to sort the same item, repeatedly.

Rule: if you handle the item a second time, and can't figure out where it belongs, toss it.

Spend Time Planning your Storage Strategy

The time that you spend in thinking through your storage strategy will pay off for you throughout the school year. Put some thought into just how and where you will store files, materials and supplies.

Be especially deliberate about what you will take home, and what you will leave at school.

Probably everyone has been guilty of carting home stuff that "we are going to work on," only to cart it back to school the next day, untouched.

OK. Once or twice is forgivable, but every day?

Keeping Track

You need to develop a planning strategy that you can track and follow through with.

Paper-based, computer-based, personal digital assistant-based (even cell phone-based) planners all can work for you, or not, depending on your preference, your up front planning, and your follow through.

For a reference to teacher planning, refer to our eZine.

Classroom Planning and Project Management

The amount of planning that you need to be doing now is..."a lot".

Pretend that you are going to present an all day workshop to your colleagues, or even to the superintendent, about how to plan for the year.

Develop the graphic organizers, mind maps, planning charts, even the PowerPoint(TM) presentations.

Make sure that you cover all the bases. You don't want unplanned for surprises just as you are implementing your strategy.

Your Creative Intelligences

The planning thought process will look, feel or sound differently to each person, depending upon their preferred mode of thinking.

Some people will talk themselves through each section of their plan (Verbal/ Auditory).

Some people will picture each frame of the plan (Visual/ Spatial).

Some people will check off each priority and create checklists of milestones (Logical/ Mathematical).

Some people will step through each step in a "subliminal physical way" (Physical/ Tactile/ Kinesthetic)

Some people will get together with a group and develop joint plans (Interpersonal)

A few people will hum, choreograph, meditate on or commune with nature concerning their plans; but not many teachers rely solely on these approaches because these kinds of plans are difficult to turn in each week.

The Substitute Folder

Put together a substitute folder, even before meeting your students.

And, while you are at it, put together at least one week's worth of "fallback lessons and generic instructional materials for yourself, too.

Business people call a time-oriented set of folders, usually one for each month and one for each day a "Tickler File". I

suppose that the items in the file are supposed to tickle your memory (if you remember to refer to them).

Future Resolve

Resolve to prevent clutter from ever reaching this level of height and weight again.

A tiny bit of daily diligence goes a long way in taming your trash.

But, don't get so carried away that you feel guilty every time you pass a trash basket and fail to contribute. There is no red-suited bell ringer standing next to it. Just contribute to the trash can as generously and as often as you can, and you will rest easier at night.

Guaranteed!

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Quick Tips at 08:00

Top Tips

The Perils of Parody

Parody represents a benefit to teachers since the use of parody and its devious kin, satire, are "protected speech." So, by developing lessons that target parody and satire, teachers can skirt the normal copyright "Fair Use" issues, and use whatever they want. And skirting normal fair use is mandatory since draconian budget cuts ensure that none of the needed materials required for enhancing the curriculum were ordered. (And, if these materials were ordered, they will arrive in time for your lesson on this topic during the next school year.)

No Downside

There doesn't seem to be any downside to the use of parody and satire in classrooms because teachers enjoy wide support for the freedom to engage in academic inquiry and the freedom to engage in the unbridled pursuit of truth. This is a "Win-Win" situation.

And, if these weren't enough benefits, add the fact that humor enhances memory and learning in every subject.

Besides, parody and satire prove to be just the kind of cutting-edge (emphasis on cutting) that teenagers devour. Satire and parody are a match made in heaven for teenagers, and for those teachers blessed with the privilege of teaching this age group.

Connecting with (and Building Rapport with) Cynical, Counter-Culture Students

Because of the broad latitude and wide umbrella of academic freedom, it is easy to integrate parody and satire into all content-area subjects. (A lot easier than integrating technology, since material for parody and satire is abundant, whereas technology and access to it, is scarce.) Note: remember those unbelievably deep budget cuts?

Check out any newscast. The foibles, fiascos, and foolishness of elected official, politicians, school superintendents and school board trustees (no pun intended) provide fodder for the "Mockery Mill" that you run daily in your classroom.

Since these are public figures, you don't have to worry about slander and libel laws like you would with ordinary, honest citizens.

And, if the news is dry, you can always make up some scandal because these folks, especially the politicians; are almost always covering up the sex (no pun intended), graft and incompetence that they have their fingers in (or on); on an almost daily basis.

Bonus Lessons

We have posted two sample essays to demonstrate just how easy the integration of parody and satire are. These are in the form of two complementary essays concerning the current immigration debate.

The authors of these essays, A. Bigot and A. Zealot, enjoy wide fame on the media airways daily as they propound their "One-Size-Fits-Everybody and the Kitchen-Sink" doctrines. Added to this preponderance of pontifications is the added benefit that each author is so right that they do not have to pay attention to a single word that the other side writes. Links to the parody articles. No "Flames" Please. Remember that these articles are satire, and only sound extreme when we write them; but the arguments are less clear and less understandable when delivered with with "bureaucratic speak" by "slippery-tongued" politicians.

[Link to the A. Bigot Article \(PDF Format\)](#)

[Link to the A. Zealot Article \(PDF Format\)](#)

Just imagine all the creative ways that you can have your class study these essays.

Here are a few suggestions: Students list each elected official, and sort each into categories personified by A. Bigot and/ or A. Zealot. (Hint: Some politicians could be both)

Students interview teachers on campus, and decide which, if any, category each teacher belongs in

Students create two non-functional political parties (modeled after two that we don't need to name), and make speeches as they run for the following offices:

Office of Immigrant Catcher (Modeled after Dog Catcher)

Office of Immigrant Zoning

Immigration Community Infiltration Officer

Warden (Self-explanatory)

District Immigrant Attorney (Modeled after the District Attorney)

Immigrant Defender (Modeled after the Public Defender)
Solitary Confinement Guard
Chief Justice, Court of No Appeal
Military Tribunal Briefing Officer
Military Tribunal Intimidation Officer
Secretary of Under Employment
Secretary of Deportation and Humiliation
Students Create Mind-Less-Maps of the "Pro and Con" Arguments
Students Create Dialogue Maps of the Arguments using a scale to measure how extreme each argument is
Students Collect Pennies, and the student body votes on whether to donate the funds to either...
Retired Immigrant-Tracker Bloodhound Benevolent Fund
The Institute for the Promulgation of Fake IDs
If you know of another issue that you would like to have us examine in our typical fair and even handed manner, please let us know.

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Top Tips at 07:00

Teacher Resources

C-SPAN Classroom: Free Resources for Teaching Civics & U.S. Government
Teacher who teach history or government, current events...and even math and science...can find lots of free material at the C-SPAN site. Descriptions from the C-SPAN site: Link to sign up for a free membership.
Educators can enroll in the C-SPAN Free Membership Service for ideas, information and resources for teaching U.S. government and civics with C-SPAN's television programming and web sites.
Link to enrollment form.
Learn more through C-SPAN's FAQ's page
Membership Benefits
Classroom resources linked to national standards in U.S. government and civics-a comprehensive archive of video clips with discussion questions, student activities, graphic organizers, worksheets, quizzes created by fellow educators
Periodic special offers, such as free classroom posters
E-mail updates about C-SPAN programs and C-SPAN Classroom web resources relevant to your subject area and grade level
For daily updates of C-SPAN programming, sign up for an additional service, C-SPAN Alert!
Unrestricted taping and viewing rights on C-SPAN-produced programming for use in the classroom
Eligibility for our Teacher Fellowship and other contests and opportunities
Eligibility to apply for a C-SPAN Archives Grant to obtain video from the C-SPAN Archives at no cost
The Archives offer a searchable database and research assistance as well as compilation tapes of C-SPAN programs
Access to the C-SPAN Educators' Hotline, at 1-800-523-7586. Call with questions about teaching with C-SPAN

C-SPAN's coverage may not agree with your brand of political ideology, but their extensive coverage seems balanced. If you want to get involved in the political process by letting your Congressional Delegates hear your opinions, type your Zip Code in the form below, and follow up in contacting the politicians that "work for you."

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Teacher Resources at 06:00

Book Review

Staying Well with Guided Imagery

Author: Naparstek, Belleruth ISBN: 0-446-51821-2 Format: Hard cover Pub. Date: 1994 Publisher: NY: Warner Books
Pages: 228 Cost: \$19.95 (List) Available: Amazon & eBay; at as low as \$11.16 (new) \$5.16 (used) - \$5.28 at eBay
Subtitle:
How to Harness the Power of Your Imagination for Health and Healing
The Books' Topics:
How and Why Imagery Works
Different Kinds of Imagery
Imagery for Health
Imagery for Emotional Resiliency
Imagery Exercises for Common Complaints

The central themes of this book are:

The healing response to imagery is innate and powerful

Imagery improves health, learning and performance

Imagery methods are adaptable using taped scripts, music, and suggestion

Imagery is a natural skill of the unconscious mind

Creative imagery methods work for just about everybody

Keywords:

Imagery

Altered State of Consciousness

Relaxation and Reverie

Scripts

Main Idea: The use of Guided Imagery and the production of Guided Imagery recordings is a scientific method for helping people heal themselves better and faster.

These guided imagery methods also work for self-improvements in emotional response, attitude and performance.

The altered state that the daydream-like guided imagery elicits is beneficial for healing, learning and changing habits.

Practice with imagery techniques produces greater skill and accelerated (sometimes amazing) results.

Quotes: Note: Bold text reflects font weight in the original.

"...most people make the mistake of thinking that imagery means something strictly visual...When I refer to imagery, I'm talking about any perception that comes through any of the senses." (p. - 17)

"These sensory images are the true language of the body, the only language it understands immediately and without question. To the body, these images can be almost as real as actual events...Our bodies don't discriminate between sensory images in the mind and what we call reality." (p. - 17 & 18)

"In the altered state, we are capable of more rapid and intense healing, growth, learning, and change." (p. - 22 & 23)

"By altered state, I mean a state of relaxed focus, a kind of calm but energized alertness, a focused reverie. Attention is concentrated on one thing, or on a very narrow band of things. AS this happens, we find that we have increased sensitivity to what we are focused on, and a decreased awareness of the other things that are going on around us, things that we would ordinarily notice." (p. - 23)

"We are in and out of altered states all day long. Sometimes it's just for a matter of seconds." (p. - 23)

"We feel better about ourselves when we have a sense of mastery over what is happening to us. Conversely, a sense of helplessness lowers self-esteem, not to mention our ability to cope and our hopefulness about the future." (p. - 26)

"Skill at using imagery increases with practice...The more you use imagery, the more your response to it deepens, intensifies, and becomes controllable. So don't make limiting assumptions about your capacity. It will grow exponentially." (p. - 28 & 29)

"Imagery works best in a permissive, unforced atmosphere. It is a gentle, amorphous, right-brain activity that thrives on a soft, receptive state of mind. Commanding, scolding, or threatening yourself will not only not work but will probably defeat your purpose." (p. - 31)

"Nor do old notions of 'paying attention' apply here. This is the sort of experience where it is normal to fade in and out. So don't expect the kind of rigorous, alert attentiveness that you invoked to, say, study for exams. That was using the left side of your brain. This is your right side. The right brain is dreamy, nonlogical, and laid-back." (p. -32)

"It is certainly true that words are much more confining and limiting than images by themselves. The minute we try to cram what we perceive into the artificial constraints of language, we have already tampered with the truth and limited it to some degree." (p. -36)

"Being in a relaxed, focused, altered state; using all of your senses for your imagery, and especially the feeling sense in the body; continued practice; going to the same place with the same props each time, at least initially; the same initial beginning rituals, such as taking two or three deep breaths; using music for background; the accompanying use of touch, such as putting your hands over your belly as you breathe; a permissive, unforced atmosphere; using images that feel right to you, as opposed to imposing an external ideas of "correctness" onto yourself; not trying too hard, and a willingness to stop for the moment if you think you are..." (p. -199)

"We all need to daydream spontaneously. This helps us solve problems, get in touch with deeper parts of ourselves, and take some much needed 'vacation' time from everyday reality." (p. - 199)

"...Children are naturals at using imagery. They respond to it very easily and very intensely, because they haven't had time to be acculturated away from this natural ability." (p. - 207)

"...imagery is bad for you when you use it to avoid taking responsibility for your life. The imagination is a fabulous gift and an amazing tool. It enriches our lives and extends our capacity for all manner of things. But it should never seduce us away from taking care of ourselves in normal, waking reality." (p. - 216)

Issues Addressed by the Book: The author focuses upon uses of imagery with serious health issues, i.e., cancer, cardiovascular issues, depression, grief and loss, and immune system malfunction. The author also focuses upon lesser issues such as headache, pain, allergies, insomnia and fatigue; issues that many teachers experience as a result of the stress of their jobs.

Teachers can also learn a great deal by modeling how these scripts give instructions and orders to students. The scripts

give suggestions and imply benefits, they do not give orders.

Teachers should avoid giving orders that students don't already want to do, and teachers should avoid engaging in power struggles with students.

The use of recorded imagery scripts in a classroom setting provides the additional benefit of improving behavior, memory and performance. Due to the tendency of human nature for people to improve whenever they feel like that are being treated in a special way, teachers can communicate that students who hear these recordings are special. This pattern of improving in response to receiving special attention is commonly known as the "Hawthorne Effect."

The Book's Shortcomings:The book focuses upon clinical and extreme health issues for many of its pages. This makes the book less suitable for classroom teachers.

But, the book was written for clinicians, and for members of the general public who are beset with health issues.

The book also weaves instructions between pages instead of listing or directly addressing controversial ideas.

For example, the book weaves the belief in the existence of a "soul" into some of the scripts. This is a topic that most teachers in public schools would not dare to broach. In fact, many parochial schools might not support the personal, intuitive, self-directed spiritual communication that the author suggests because their specific, institutionalized dogma trumps personal experience of the ineffable.

Comments:Imagery is a tool that all teachers can use every day. The costs are small, especially if imagery scripts are read from a notebook. The script can be recorded once, and replayed many times. These recordings can also be used in a learning center.

More importantly, students can learn to integrate imagery with other learning skills and acquire a life-long benefit.

The author presents an accurate summary of the practical methods for using guided imagery in a nineteen page FAQ section at the back of the book. This is worth reading carefully. Other than that, the scripts in this book are a resource for a teacher who wants to integrate imagery procedures into classroom instruction.

The individual scripts are examples that were tested with a lot of patients afflicted with specific conditions. But, teachers can adapt the patterns as appropriate for their classes.

Summary: This, or a book like it is important for teachers because the linear, cognitive information spooning of teacher-delivered lecture material to students is marginally effective.

In addition, imagery is a tool that teachers can use to decrease their own stress, and to increase their recovery from late hours of mental exertion (a typical job hazard).

And, understanding the creative process involved in using "altered states" has connections to use for other strategies recommended by Classroom Toolkit.

These are:

Daily Inspirational Messages

See our newsletter article: [Link to the article...](#)

The Mutual Storytelling Technique

See our newsletter article: [Link to the article...](#)

Helping students cope with the stress of high-stakes tests

See our newsletter article concerning a saliva stress test and our recommendation [Link to the article...](#)

You didn't think that we were going to let the NCLB Law off the hook, did you? The NCLB Act is a major perpetrator (or as they say on the police shows, "Perp" of of stress in our schools.

Rating (Four Point scale):

Useful - 4

Applicable - 4

Relevant - 4

Innovative - 3

Original - 3

Interesting - 3

Overall Rating - 3.5

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Book Review at 05:00

Site Strategy

Site Strategy and Progress

Our flagship Web site, Classroom Toolkit.Com averaged 58 visitors a day during the month of July, 2006. A total of 1,819 visitors accessed 7,396 pages. These are the highest numbers recorded during our site's history. This total number of pages does not include the downloads that visitors access while selecting multiple links on the same page.

Despite a number of pages that were dropped by MSN™ (MSM™ continues to be erratic as it implements its new search engine), our site's pages continue to rank well with the Search Engines.

We have a number of pages in the top ten (First Page of the search results) for four Search Engines:

Google™ - 15 pages

Yahoo - 7 pages

MSN - 10 pages

Ask (formerly AskJeeves/Teoma) - 10 pages

Of these, our Number One ranking (Top site referenced for that search term) included:

Google - 7 pages

Yahoo - 4 pages

MSN - 4 pages

Ask (formerly AskJeeves/Teoma) - 4 pages

We are also developing our tutoring site, and will continue to add content now that our Newsletter is completed for this month.

You can preview this newsletter at:

Classroom Toolkit Tutorials

A Further Note

Our Newsletter is formatted and published with the Open Source product, Serendipity. Serendipity is really a Blogging system, but we have figured out how to configure it to function as a newsletter system.

This means that the power of this newsletter is available without cost for the software.

Our Tutorials are formatted and published using another Open Source product, Moodle. Look for additional tutorials to be developed now that our July newsletter has been published.

Moodle is a Learning Management System (LMS).

Our only cost for publishing both of these resources is a hosting fee to Go-Daddy.Com for \$3.95 per month.

Look for information in the future about how you can use the same Open Source software for your school district or your business.

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Site Progress at 04:00

Open Source for Education

Open Source Projects in our Schools: Let's Dialogue about Real World Issues

I believe that real-world issues need to be opened for discussion, and that an open dialogue needs to begin. Open Source Advocates need to open a communications channel to bring teachers into this dialogue, and they must pay attention to the needs of teachers. If Open Source Advocates fail to complete this single step, they become no better than the clueless administrators that drive unworkable, useless and detrimental curriculum initiatives.

Most of the time, Open Source Advocates put technology first, and teachers are not considered as a primary part of an Open Source implementation plan.

I suggest that Open Source proponents open a dialogue with teachers, discover curriculum needs, and assess the "what is" condition of education before presenting solutions. Any sign off on Open Source solutions needs to come from teachers, as well as other stakeholders.

Teachers prescribing technology and Open Source Advocates prescribing "solutions to educational intelligence issues" are both dead ends.

The teachers job is to set requirements, functional targets, and student outcomes. None of these should be (or can be) set by Open Source Advocates, district administrators, or school district technology departments.

Once teachers set requirements, it is up to technology staff and other support staff to identify a package of equipment, software, and support services that can deliver on these requirements. (This package is the project or initiative.) The technology department should develop a service plan, called a Service Level Agreement (SLA). The SLA spells out uptime, response time, and other service factors that will be guaranteed. Technology staff also should attach a price tag to this entire package...a realistic price tag with enough funding for contingencies.

The teachers job is not to prescribe technology or set budgets. Delivering instruction is what teachers are experts at. Teachers do not know the ramifications of the purchase of any technology system, computer purchase and long-term maintenance requirements, of network feasibility.

Once teachers set requirements, and after technology develops a solution package and budget; it is up to district administrators to put together a funding strategy. District administrators have a limited knowledge of instruction, and a less than competent knowledge of technology; so their focus must be restricted to identifying priorities and putting together a funding package.

A funding package consists of all elements that are required to ensure that the project will be successful.

Teachers will identify every (and all) instructional cost associated with the project proposal, including:

Training and professional development...

Costs for Release Time

Costs for After School Stipends

Costs for Trainers
Costs for Training Materials
Costs for Training Equipment
Costs for Consultants

Technology then calculates the total cost to provide a solution for each requirement.

All hardware, software, network and support costs will be evaluated
All training costs will be calculated

Administrators will identify all direct and indirect management costs associated with this project

Cost Areas

The biggest factor responsible for whether a school district obtaining its money's worth [Return on Investment ROI] in any Open Source project implementation is the professional development and the backend systems programming that need to be put in place. Almost every district fails on this crucial measure. The reason for this waste and inadequate planning is the making decisions and project choices without finding out what teachers and students need. This mistake is made both by district administrators and by district technologists. The second factor contributing to project waste is the under funding of almost all educational programs. The areas most likely to be shortchanged, under funded, "skimped on" are the items that teachers need most:

Release time

Paid training, if after the training is held after hours
In class modeling (of technology integration methods) by experts who have actually done this integration successfully
Personal self-improvement plans that targeted a three-year period for gaining competence
Access to reliable technical support instead of a 150 to 1 (or more) computers per technicians staffing levels

If school district administrators do not want to pay for the introduction of technology in a professional way, they should say so.

Valuing Teachers

Teacher time is under valued, disrespected, and considered "free." and teacher status is less than professional. It is ironic that because teachers are considered "professional" that they are considered "exempt" from overtime (and fair treatment). This means that time that custodians, cafeteria workers and bus drivers is respected more (and paid attention to more) than teachers' time.
The True Meaning of "Exempt"
What "Exempt" means in actual practice is...

Hundreds of extra work that teachers do will be uncompensated

Teachers will be forced to work on "extra" projects to make up for administrator mismanagement and budget shortfalls
Experimental, superfluous, political and questionable initiatives will be forced on teachers
To compensate for budget planning shortfalls, teachers will be forced to do more; i.e., teachers are an almost unlimited source of free labor

Because these forced and unreasonable projects are not funded (they operate "below the radar screen". Unless the project accidentally pans out, no one will ever check to discover just how much teacher time and teacher energy were wasted on the go-nowhere, achieve-nothing, "push stress to the max" initiative

The uncompensated time that teachers are forced to "contribute" will not be appreciated
Teachers will be blamed for the less than satisfactory results of the "initiative"

Adopting an Open Source Strategy

An Open Source strategy has a chance for adoption in our schools when Open Source advocates start talking to teachers and describing benefits for adoption to teachers using educational and student outcome terms. Talking to teachers about how Open Source software is free, or how Open Source software is "better" than Microsoft's software; software is useless. Microsoft's software is good enough for what most teachers want to do, teachers buy Microsoft's office software for about 1/3 that retail price, and the Microsoft's operating system software comes pre-installed on their home computer. Teachers don't know (and probably don't care) that Microsoft's sells office productivity software to school districts at almost 1/10 of the retail price...almost giving the software away.

And, teachers don't care if money is saved on software because there is always plenty of money to fund useless projects that some administrator pushes without asking teachers if the project is of any value. (When royalty feasts, it is difficult to convince the peasants that there is a famine.)

Dialogue Across the Board

I am not advocating that we focus a dialogue on a single group (teachers), to the exclusion of other stakeholders. What I am proposing is that we pay attention to teachers instead of ignoring them, instead of treating them as though they were an unlimited source of free work and instead of treating them as though they were of marginal importance in the planning, delivery and management of instruction to our students.

The success of the Open Source Movement needs to be measured by learning outcomes for our students, rather than how much of what kind of computers and operating systems are installed; or by how much money was not spent. This success must be systemic and systematic if it is to be considered accomplished.

Systemic and systematic means that the levels of teacher performance and the level of improvement of instructional delivery and instructional management skills are measured.

Success of the Open Source project depends upon the benefits that the technology delivers to students and teacher, benefits that cannot be delivered better in any other way.

If any other conditions are set as outcome targets, we will continue to see what we have now, an oasis of technology application here or there, scattered in the desert of computers with no real curricular use.

It is unrealistic to think that any one group can assume sole leadership of the Open Source movement, but, the Open Source movement needs a strategic focus. Because teachers are the key to education, I believe that teachers should be the Open Source movement's strategic focus.

Instead of thinking, "Teachers have not been doing their part to integrate technology, let's put more pressure on them," a better and more accurate assumption is needed. That assumption is that "Technology will be integrated when it is easy enough, and reliable enough, and when it solves enough instructional needs." Until technology benefits become invisible; and instructional needs become obvious, apparent and visible through the use of technology...benefits for which technology delivers the easiest, fastest and most desirable results...the Open Source advocates will be talking another language other than "teacher language."

Real-World Questions

Here are some questions for the real world that Open Source advocates need to ask:

What will it take to ensure that every student is helped along in the curriculum through the use of technology tools?

What support do we need to provide teachers for integrating this technology?

How long will it take teachers to develop new skills, how long to implement new ways of teaching, how long to change?

How do we restructure school governance and operation to ensure that these changes are made, system-wide?

How much money will this take?

When do we commit whatever it takes to make this happen?

What other "priorities" will we have to defer to make this happen?

What backend programming do we have to complete before our solutions are easy enough for teachers to adopt?

Marketing Educational Benefits

It is benefits that build adoption, not technical superiority.

Open Source solutions needs to be marketed, and that marketing needs to focus on benefits to students and teachers, rather than a focus upon the technology.

"Ease of use" was not enough to keep school districts loyal to Apple(TM), and "Free" is not enough to bring school districts into the fold as serious adopters of Open Source technology.

What Open Source developers need to be working on are "Killer Applications"...applications that will make teachers' work easier and more effective?

I always point to the copy machine as the competition that Open Source, computers and software must beat in the classroom.

Open Source software and materials solutions must become...

"Push button" easy

Indispensable

The test is whether Open Source software and materials save teachers time, reduce teachers' work load, and perform job-related tasks better than any other application.

When Open Source solutions can answer, "Yes, we deliver time-savings, workload reducing, better than anything else" solutions, the Open Source movement will be over.

Open Source will then be "Mainstream."

Real-World Action Plans

Programs, initiatives, projects and prescriptions cannot be copied from one site to another, or even from one classroom

to another.

Real-world action plans have to be unique and tailor-made for each location, no exceptions.

The same "prescription" will not work for every campus in a district, or, for any two districts, and maybe not for any two campuses within the same district.

This is one of the mistakes that politicians and administrators make when they want education to conform to Industrial Age, factory output methods. The outcomes from this approach will always tend toward the mean, i.e., move closer and closer toward mediocrity.

What this means is that Open Source solutions must be easy to customize.

Open Source solutions must be dynamic, not static. Applications must be easy to be made to do what teachers want.

The applications should not make teachers do what the application wants.

Take Standards with a "Grain of Salt"

A district must strike a balance between standards and individual creativity and dynamic, self-directed improvement.

Too many, tight, rigid standards; and creativity and spontaneity are sapped, and educational outcomes are diminished.

There is lots of stress in the classroom that coalesces around conformity.

Too few standards, and curriculum maps become puzzles, educational outcomes diminish and stress abounds.

Standards without funding sends educational outcomes into a downward spiral.

Standards without professional development and sufficient "time to learn and practice" sends stress (for both teachers and students) "through the roof."

And, that professional development must be done right.

Instead of learning word processing, spreadsheet use, and the other flavor-of-the-day application initiative; the training needed to focus upon what teachers do in their classrooms, minute-by-minute to engage, motivate, empower and energize students.

The educational outcomes (results) that most schools and classrooms have achieved from the introduction of computers has been dismal.

I think that we would have seen the same appalling results if Open Source systems had been placed in schools, if Open Source operating systems had been placed in schools in the same way that the Microsoft®; and Apple®; systems were.

Learning from our Mistakes

This Opinion-Editorial suggests the changes that Open Source advocates and school districts need to make to bring the promise of Open Source solutions to fruition.

Do you think that Open Source advocates, school administrators, politicians and school district technologists have learned from past mistakes and are charging a corrected course toward well-managed improvements.

What is the chance of success for the Open Source movement?

Answer: There is a high chance of success if teachers are involved in the planning, funding and implementation dialogue.

The chances of mediocre results or downright failure, similar to our track record, remain high if teachers remain shut out of the planning, funding and implementation dialogue.

The Key to Open Source Success

Teachers are the key, but someone has to show politicians, school administrators, school technologists and politicians that there is a door and a lock.

Teachers are the key, but someone has to convince politicians, school administrators and school technologists to stop turning locks and doors into walls and barricades to learning.

Our prescription for Open Source success: Start talking to teachers, start listening, start fulfilling teachers' needs.

In the immortal words of teachers everywhere, "OK Class, please pay attention."

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Open Source at 03:00