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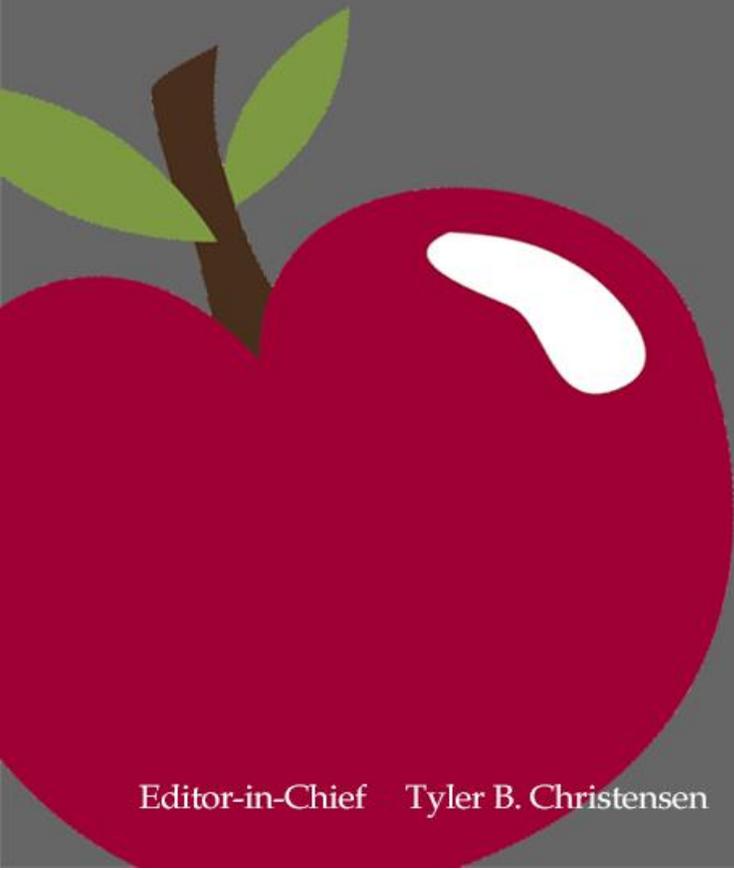## Journal on Best Teaching Practices

*A Journal for Pre-service Teacher Candidates
by Pre-service Teacher Candidates*

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JOURNAL ON BEST TEACHING PRACTICES

Eliminating the Tip of the Tongue
Alex Andre-Knudsen

Everyone at some point in time has racked their brain for the answer to a question, only to discover it awaiting merely imminent retrieval rather than being easily accessible. This common "tip of the tongue" phenomenon has been around for generations and means that the brain recalls some related information, but is unable to recall a particular portion of the information (Brown & McNeil, 1966). However, this is useless when one cannot determine the specific answer on an exam. In education, students are traditionally taught and then assessed afterward, making long-term memory retention essential. So what can teachers do to improve the retention of information in their classroom? In order to answer this seemingly simple question, we must first examine how our students remember information.

The three main components in remembering information are encoding, storage, and retrieval (Mastin, 2010). Before students can retrieve information from their memory, it must first be encoded and then stored. Items are stored in the brain by first passing through a buffer, and then getting encoded into the long-term memory. Every person has a different buffer capacity and it varies based on the difficulty of the task, but a general buffer capacity is from two to five items (Lehman & Malmberg, 2013). This means that teachers should keep the main topics covered during one class period below five if they want their students to encode each topic to memory. In order to enhance memory retrieval, the two factors that are most applicable to the classroom are chunking and maintenance rehearsal. Chunking is a term used when discussing associations made during the encoding stage. When trying to access certain information, the memory starts by targeting the topic or "chunk" of memory, allowing the rest of the information to be accessed through links to the topic. The stronger the associations or links made during encoding; the more likely it is that all of the information will be remembered (Lehman & Malmberg, 2013). Maintenance rehearsal on the other hand, can be equated to the amount of time spent studying. It is common knowledge that more time spent studying improves one's ability to recall the information, but simply studying information for hours on end isn't as effective as spreading out studying over days, weeks, or even months. There is research supporting this that states separating learning over time rather than all in one session maximizes long-term retention (Cepeda, Pashler, Vul, Wixted, & Rohrer, 2006). This is why all students are encouraged to avoid cramming. After discovering that students will remember the information better if teachers limit the number of main topics covered, develop strong associations within each topic, and promote studying more often over time, there must be strategies that teachers can employ to accomplish these goals in the classroom.

Most teachers already do a good job of limiting the number of topics covered during a class period, but the buffer capacity stresses the importance of including summaries in their lesson plans. It's also important to note that items at the beginning and end of a list are remembered better than those in the middle (Lehman & Malmberg, 2013). Strategically placing these summaries at the beginning and/or end of class can make a significant difference for not only later in the year, but throughout their academic career. As far as developing strong associations within each topic, organizing lesson plans effectively will help make the links to the topic sturdier. The information being taught must be in the correct sequence, with logical titles and sub-topics. As a very basic example, imagine if a history class wasn't taught chronologically. The students would be more likely to mix up the information, or even forget it completely. As a supplement to effective organization, research shows that chunking not only occurs with item to item associations, but also with item to context associations (Lehman & Malmberg, 2013). Effective lesson plans should then not only emphasize connections between aspects of a topic, but when

possible incorporate context associations as well. Pneumonic devices, acronyms, and even catchy songs are just some of the strategies teachers can use to help their students create context associations in their memory. A biographical movie about an elementary classroom in Harlem provides a great example when the teacher gets his students to remember all of the presidents' names in chronological order by inserting them into a rap song (Cox, McNeil, & Haines, 2006). At the end of the year, the students still remember the song, and therefore all of the presidents. This is a great example of how context can improve the retention of information, as well as getting your students interested in the topic.

One of the biggest struggles for teachers is getting their students to study more frequently and avoid cramming. Most importantly, teachers should be enthusiastic and creative to get students to be interested in what they are studying. When students are interested like in the Harlem elementary classroom, they are more likely to keep up with the homework and spend time studying. On top of being enthusiastic and creative, another strategy teachers can employ is issuing more quizzes and tests. Research shows that repeated exposures and repeated testing, especially over time, lead to deeper knowledge and better retention (Bacon & Stewart, 2006). There have been several studies supporting this theory, especially in higher education. In post course surveys of an introductory accounting class, students felt that because of the daily quizzes they came to class more prepared. Also, they indicated that they were more motivated to keep up with assignments and readings (Braun & Sellers, 2012). As for daily quizzes' effectiveness in a k-12 environment, a controlled study was done in high school geometry classrooms. Given the same homework, exams, and teacher, two classes received a weekly quiz while two were issued daily quizzes. The average score in the daily quiz classes was 12% higher on homework and 9% higher on the final exam (Shirvani, 2009). Initially students might not like this classroom structure, but in another study 96% of the students who were issued daily quizzes ended up preferring that method and 100% of them thought that it led to more learning (Connor-

Greene, 2000). As a bonus beyond simply promoting more frequent studying, the more often teachers give tests or quizzes, the more assessments they receive to keep tabs on the progress of their students.

After looking at how students remember information, improving the retention of that information becomes simpler. The solution is to limit the number of main topics covered each class period, organize lesson plans effectively, and issue quizzes more frequently. If successfully incorporated by teachers, their students will find the information readily available on exam day instead of merely on the tip of their tongue.

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Learning Communities
Jordyn Tansom

"Founded on a philosophy of operations that encompasses respect, team work, creativity, and trust between participants" (Rutledge, 1996). Is the author referring to a fraternity, work group or sports team? Actually, this statement is referring to *Learning Communities*. So, what are they, how do they work and what do they add to the academic experience?

While there are a number of definitions of Learning Communities, the community I encountered is referred to as a peer community, defined as "a group of people that come together to meet specific and unique learning needs, and to share resources and skills," (Tosey, 1999). Within in this structure each step you take and each technique that you learn is done within your group or community of your peers (Nimmo, 2002). I have encountered an example of a peer learning community at the University of Wisconsin River Falls. Located on the fourth floor of a residence building there is a Learning Community comprised of a group of college students that that have chosen to live in the same wing of the dorm to focus on their common academic pursuits - studying Elementary or Secondary Education. This particular community is called TEACH. The students are in the close quarters where they focus on course content, exchange ideas and reflect on those elements of learning that can enhance their effectiveness as student and future teacher.

There are many ways to make a Learning Community run effectively. But how can it be achieved? A Learning Community is most beneficial when the members share similar interests, intensions, and learning habits. Assembling participants possessing similar interests is important because it opens up windows of discussion (Tosey, 1999). The members of specific communities feed off the discoveries made by the other members of the community about the topic of interest (Tosey, 1999).

In addition to common interests, the community experience is even more conducive to growth when the members share the same intensions and commitment to succeed. This creates very real peer pressure that favorably impacts the motivation of each member as no individual member wants to let the others down (Nimmo, 2002). In a sense the binding agent is the desire to strengthen yourself to contribute to the group.

Another way to formulate an effective Learning Community is by gathering students with similar learning habits (Tosey, 1999). The different learning styles can include be visual, tangible, or many others. Putting students that learn the same way in a groups often enhances individual learning. Putting the students that learn the same together and then teaching in that specific way, you are opening up the opportunity for achievement (Rocconi, 2011). An example of where this could be used is would be assigning students into Learning Communities that focus on the different styles of teaching. While this requires greater insight and awareness by the teacher, delivery of the message in a manner that is best received, processed and applied is clearly in the best interest of the participants.

The success of Learning Communities is evidenced by better grades in school, a higher attendance rate, improved reading and math skills, and eventually the accomplishment of earning a diploma (Rutledge, 1996). At the core of these advancements is the increase in student motivation due to participation in a community. Membership creates positive pressure to achieve, born out of the fact that your failures will not only disappoint yourself, but your community as a whole (Nimmo, 2002).

Finally, while the peer community is not created to be a therapeutic community, studies have shown that these communities have encouraged communicational, social, personal growth in individuals (Tosey, 1999). I asked a

member of the Learning Community TEACH, Mitchell Kohrs, what he feels is the most beneficial part of being in a Learning Community. His response was, "Accountability, you are able to rely on your fellow members for help and guidance as you progress through your learning experiences."

Throughout my research I have gained valuable insight and knowledge on what a Learning Community is and how it is beneficial to learning. I can see how this concept can be leveraged in the classroom someday by thoughtfully clustering students with common needs and learning styles to create mini learning communities that add a sense of motivation and commitment to the learning objectives.

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Interview with Mitchell Kohrs, student at the University of Wisconsin River Falls

Peer Learning
Emily Hudson

With such high competition for acceptance rates into colleges and few jobs available, being an independent learner is a necessity. One of the ways that teachers can help encourage students to become independent learners is to incorporate peer learning into the classroom. This allows students the opportunity to solve problems with their peers instead of relying on their teachers for answers. Peer learning has been proven to improve grades, and boost the confidence and attitudes of the students by allowing them to work together, as a team, to actively solve problems.

One of the main issues associated with peer learning, is ensuring that students are working together, and not letting the people who understand the material, do all the work. Incorporating peer learning effectively is a very difficult task; it must be strategically planned to optimize student learning for everyone in the group, and differentiate between what is being taught and what is being learned (Cooper, 2002). Group work must be designed to encourage student learning, and in depth thinking, instead of using it as a time to relax and just communicate. In the article "*Productive Helping in Cooperative Groups,*" Webb states that there are four areas where teachers can help encourage the productivity and learning of everyone in the group.

The first area is to establish positive norms for group work. Webb suggests that teachers create positive group atmospheres that students feel comfortable contributing to by providing elaborated help instead of just answers, and focusing on understanding concepts instead of memorizing procedures (Webb, 2002). At the University of North Carolina in Charlotte, the Chemistry department recruited peer learning coaches to provide the proper atmosphere for small groups in their chemistry classes. The learning coaches did not act as tutors, but rather as guides to their classmates. They encouraged students to actively think and solve their way

through the problem instead of doing exactly what was told to them by the professor. They also helped guide the group by making sure that each of the students were participating in discussion, challenging peer opinions without causing confrontation, and keeping students on track. Having these learning coaches actually increased the student's confidence which resulted in higher grades in class, and on exams (Popejoy & Asala, 2013).

Second, was to structure the tasks in ways that supported learning and understanding. In order to do this, Webb suggested that teachers provide fewer problems and allow more time to complete the given assignment. This would prevent groups from feeling rushed during the assignment, allowing students to actively work through the problems instead of cheating off of their fellow classmates. Teachers also should avoid giving rewards, based on group performance, because it only encourages students who don't understand the material to copy off of others who do (Webb, 2002). In the University of Geneva's research "*Competitive conflict regulation and informational dependence in peer learning,*" they found that having student work that was identical to one another caused more confrontation than it did successful learning. By having work that was identical to one another, students often had opposing viewpoints, payed less attention, and took fewer notes. However, when working together on work that was different, yet contained a lot of the same ideas and principles, they critically analyzed and worked together (Buchs, Pulfrey, Gabarrot, and Butera, 2010).

The third area is to model desired behaviors by helping the students understand their misconceptions about the problem; teachers should try to discover the root of their misconception, and then provide explanations to address it (Webb, 2002). The activities should challenge pre-existing notions about a certain topic, and allow students to work through the

problem together to provide a deeper understanding about why their ideas were right or wrong (Cooper, 2002). After the students have tried to solve their misconceptions, on their own, and are still unable to solve it, the teacher should then step in to provide an explanation.

Finally, the fourth area is to monitor group work by making sure that the students are not excluding anyone and are working together actively. They should also listen to the explanations the groups are giving, and help redirect them, if they are getting off track (Webb, 2002). Teachers should ensure that conflict is not occurring in the group work; answer any questions students have, and watch for excessive talking.

Peer learning is an effective tool that can help ensure the success of all students in the classroom, boost their confidence, and encourage students to become independent learners. Activities involving group work must be carefully designed, to enhance learning, and must not be used as an opportunity to relax. Teachers must play an active role to help maintain the students learning by creating a positive work environment, structuring activities to enhance learning, model desired behaviors, and monitoring group work.

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Cooperative Learning in the Classroom
Tyler Cloud

From the beginning of time teachers of the world have been trying to figure out the best way to teach their pupils. Different practices have been tried, many have failed and others have succeeded. One teaching strategy that continued to be questioned by teachers is that of cooperative learning. When group work is announced in a class room many teachers might hear sighs, complaints, or possibly, rejoicing. Cooperative learning is a teaching practice that breaks students into groups of 3-4 with each student having a particular role within the group (Johnson-Johnson, 1999). There are many advantages to cooperative learning over individual learning based on the different dynamics that a cooperative learning group can offer. To use this strategy correctly certain structure is needed which will be discussed. Cooperative learning has advantages over individual work, including: social interaction, transfer of ideas, and group leadership skills. Using cooperative learning is more advantageous than individual learning, if used correctly (Davis, 1999, Giraud, 1997, Johnson-Johnson, 1999, 2009).

First, what exactly is cooperative learning? Cooperative learning is not just group work; but a very dynamic teaching strategy that is not as simple as it may seem. There are a few main types of cooperative learning. These types are formal, informal, and cooperative learning base groups. Formal cooperative learning is a type of group work structured in assigned groups of 3-4 students in which the teacher has already analyzed and assessed individuals to create the most effective group based on social dynamics within the group (Johnson-Johnson, 1999). Ideally formal learning groups should be made based on a mixture of intellectual ability, academic interest, and style (Davis, 1999). Informal cooperative learning is as it sounds, informal. Informal groups are made in class and can last from a few minutes to one class period. Base groups are created early on in a group of students to help foster relationships over time and can last for years (Johnson-Johnson, 2009).

Based on research the best cooperative learning groups are groups with 3-4 members (Johnson-Johnson, 1999). Each of these members has a specific role within the group, and each are held accountable by the others. Assigned roles are researcher, summarizer, collector, and technical advisor (Johnson-Johnson, 1999). This distinction of roles is what makes the difference between "group work" and actual cooperative learning.

To conduct cooperative learning, there is a specific structure that must be followed that is much more involved than regular group work. Each type of cooperative learning can be used effectively, but success is highly dependent on the type of lesson that is being discussed between the members of the group. Formal cooperative learning is most effective in longer types of projects (Johnson-Johnson, 1999). Projects such as presentations or even writing a paper over a week of lectures are best associated with formal cooperative learning. Informal cooperative learning can be used effectively in small amounts of time. If the material is short or can be summed up in one class period, informal cooperative learning can be beneficial to both teacher and students. Using informal cooperative learning can help to transfer ideas between individuals much quicker, which in turn helps students develop a better understanding of the assigned material in a small amount of time such as one class period (Johnson-Johnson 1999). Base groups are very complicated to create. Base groups are created to establish long term relationships between group members that help each other with class material, group work in class, and help outside of class. These groups are best established early (e.g. elementary school), so that in the future the students within will continue to help each other for years to come, building a long term relationship that will last through the end of their primary and secondary school careers (Johnson-Johnson, 1999). Base groups can be used to effectively track the development of students throughout the year on

subjects such as math and reading. Teachers should use the different types of cooperative learning depending on the material being assigned. Effective use of cooperative learning can assist both teacher and student in the learning process.

Cooperative learning has advantages associated with it that individual learning cannot match. The first of these advantages is social interaction. Individual work has its useful applications, but it cannot match the advantages of group work especially when it comes to social interaction. Social interaction between members of a given group helps dissolve nervousness and insecurity. As one professor's students stated, "It's easier to ask a question when it's not in front of the whole class" (Giraud, 1997). Another advantage of cooperative learning is idea transfer. When in a group, the interactions between members allow for an exchange of ideas much quicker and effectively. Group interaction allows for the more knowledgeable students in the group to help those less understanding of the material. The last advantage of cooperative learning is leadership skills. To manage many different tasks at once, and keep everyone on track, takes strong leadership skills. Cooperative learning helps to develop these skills because each person is held accountable by the other. David Johnson and Roger Johnson state that "To ensure that each member is strengthened, students are held individually accountable to do their share of the work" (Johnson-Johnson, 1999). Leadership is needed to manage each individual and because each member is held accountable and leadership is not only held by one person. The advantages of cooperative learning over individual work would then include, helping develop social skills, facilitating exchange of ideas, and the improvement of leadership skills.

Overall, cooperative learning is not just group work, but a complex teaching practice. While cooperative learning has advantages it also has disadvantages. If the wrong type of dynamics in cooperative groups are used or, these groups applied to the wrong type of lesson, the outcome could be disastrous. Managing groups also has its different challenges because of different dynamics. Cooperative learning is an effective practice that should be adopted more often for use in instruction. Because of the different advantages cooperative learning is an effective teaching practice that can be applied to many different situations, materials, and projects. Cooperative learning teaches social skills, idea exchange, and leadership skills all of which are lifelong teachings.

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We Need the Real-World!
Autumn Ruddy

Within the high school classroom many of us were told that we would be using the given material or curriculum in our everyday lives, also known as the real-world. The real-world refers to the time after students graduate from high school. To some extent this has been true however, most of what was taught to me in high school I have not yet used in the real-world. An example is how to take state administered tests; this is not going to be relevant in the future of the student and it is not a skill needed to succeed in a career. As a teacher it is your job to know what the students need and what will be useful to them when the schooling comes to an end and the real-world begins. Through real-world applications students can learn effortlessly, understand more, and make connections from the classroom to the real-world with ease.

Real-world applications allow students to progress and can give them incentive to learn and care about what is going on within the classroom. Material can be easier to understand when related to real-life issues through examples. A good example of this can be found in the study created by Dianne Chambers entitled *The Real World and the Classroom: Second-Career Teachers*. The study involved second-career teachers, meaning they started teaching at a later age because of a career change. The study showed that these teachers brought "unique skills and nontraditional methods to teaching" (Chambers, 2002). Through their previous experiences, second-career teachers took their skills and combined them with education to create a connection to the real-world for their students. This will allow the student to take what they have learned and apply it in many different situations within their lives and take their education to the next level.

Children's minds need to understand and exercise the material. Just doing the work to get it done does not help students advance in their education. This can also include tests. Students cannot just go through the motions with their education, they must apply their current and previous knowledge to the task at hand in order to really gain knowledge or build upon what they already know. A good example of a real-world application would be project based learning. This is the idea of having students show and exercise their understanding of what they have gained from the lesson through different projects and or activities. The great thing about project based learning is that students get to "freely cross disciplines" as they create their project (Curtis, 2011). This allows a variety of learning to occur; the children are not limited to one specific subject to focus upon. Instead they take a little knowledge from several different subject areas and apply them all to the one project. From this, children learn different things not strictly related to one subject. From project based learning students can retain the information they learned and can apply it in future classes as well as the real world.

The lack of project based learning or unchallenging tasks in the classroom contributes to the poor attitudes students have about learning and school in general (Blumenfeld et al., 1991). One suggestion to fix this problem is applying project based learning within the class. Given more complex problems, students are forced to understand the material and think critically instead of conveying back the information they were told by the teacher. A complex problem or a real world problem can be applied in any content area and formed into a project for students to complete. According to the article *Motivating Project-Based Learning: Sustaining the Doing, Supporting the Learning*, project based learning creates motivation and promotes the cognitive development of the student (Blumenfeld et al., 1991). Allowing students to exercise what they know through projects is a good way to keep them busy and engaged in the curriculum.

Applying the knowledge to different situations is what the students are expected to do. The curriculum taught needs to be in-depth and amusing in order for students to remember the

concept for years to come and apply it to the problems they will encounter. Lily Jones, a writing contributor to the website Teaching Channel, noted that "real life doesn't present itself in compartmentalized subject areas…" (2012). Applying knowledge to solve the problem in front of you is what teachers should want their students to gain; this can happen through application based learning. Having students come up with their own ideas and make mistakes helps further this learning. From here, students become aware of their mistakes, correct or modify their understanding of the problem, and therefore become successful and advance.

Application based teaching can help in classrooms around the world. Students will be superior with, and more prepared for solving the issues they will encounter in the real-world. In the above, real-world applications have been explained and they allow students to broaden their learning capabilities, understand more, and make stronger connections from the classroom to the real-world

with ease compared to those who do not learn through this teaching practice. Real-world scenarios can be brought into the classroom in fun and innovative projects, and or activities that will help students understand not only what they are learning, but also why they are learning it. Through application based learning students will be able to learn effortlessly and remember more; students can look back and say they are using what they were taught in school in their everyday lives.

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Teaching Current Events: A Catalyst for Social Change
Anna Head

Teachers are the catalyst for global change and kaleidoscopic innovations. By educating students in a non-biased, informative manner, and raising awareness on social injustice, teachers pave the road for a future absent of ignorance and unfounded bigotry. Teachers are responsible for informing their students on national and global current events so that their students may gain critical literacy, and form unique perspectives on the world that they can utilize in their educational endeavors and in their contributions to humanity.

Critical literacy is achieved through developing critical thinking skills which are formed by engaging students in activities that require them to advance beyond simple comprehension. To become critically literate, a student must discern the bias, alternate viewpoints, and deeper meaning of a given text. Teachers often neglect developing critical literacy skills as they place a higher importance on educating students with a massive wealth of information and facts. This myriad of information usually overwhelms students and fades from their memories after studying for exams. Teachers often educate their students in this manner in order to prepare them for standardized ability exams. Such teaching habits are a result from the liability climate formed by the No Child left Behind Act in 2001 (Pescatore, 2008). By teaching students current events and bringing issues of social injustice to light, however, a teacher can meet the goal of many state standards, such as the New York English Language Arts Standard which states, "Students will read, write, listen, and speak for critical analysis and evaluation" (English Language Arts Learning Standards, para. 3.). Advanced skills in critical literacy are also connected with high scores in mandated tests (Pescatore, 2008). In order for a teacher to develop critical literacy skills in their classroom, they must teach students how to discern any bias in a text and allow them to form personal opinions on the subject, which they may share in class discussions.

A critically literate student will view a text, which may be newspaper articles, editorials, political statements, or other media outlets, in a broad sense and as a mere presentation of an attitude or belief. This student will then take the information they have learned and the beliefs and bias reflected in this information, and personally reflect on the issue and form their own beliefs. This is why critical literacy must become an integral part of the education process. Beyond unearthing the ideology of a text, critical literacy ignites the beginnings of social change. Teachers who educate their students on current events not only arm their students with knowledge and improve their critical literacy, but also open up their minds to a plethora of newfound perspectives which could influence their future decisions and shape their character. These perspectives may lead to global change and positive contributions to humanity.

Critical literacy is based on Freire's (1970) notion that "for social change to occur, citizens must not only think critically about what they read and view, but they must also react to transform the world". These reactions are ignited through an awareness of current events. Educating students on current events may enlighten their conscience. This enlightenment may significantly influence the choices a student makes in regards to their future. A student's awareness of social injustices may inspire them to pursue a career with a humanitarian organization. Their passion for maintaining a healthy environment could steer them to a future in environmental law or protection. Teaching is not only about informing students but guiding them on their journey to self-discovery. A teacher who intertwines critical thinking skills and current events in their classroom, aids in evolving the passionate viewpoints that empower students to change the world. Whether a student changes the world through humanitarian work to end social injustices, by writing novels that bring light to

travesties, or founding organizations that aid the environment, the inkling of passion that began their quest for meaning and knowledge, is found in a classroom that promotes critical literacy and educates its students on current events.

In order for social change to occur, teachers must keep their students informed on current events and global issues. Not only does this improve critical literacy, but it also aids in molding a student's character and their unique perspectives that may change the world. A future free of inhumane travesties, pollution that strangles our environment, and a sound economy, begins with a teacher. This teacher will help rid the world of ignorance by educating their students on current events.

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Grit: Perseverance Against All Odds

Samantha Hiller

People tend to strive for intelligence, to be the smartest they can be, and often, teachers encourage that goal in ways that do not favor a student's education. Although most people prefer being told how smart they are, studies have shown that praising a student's intelligence can cause harm to a student's overall education. Rather than solely praising a student's intellect, teachers need to find a balance between encouraging hard work and making sure the student knows he or she is intelligent.

Students, beginning at a young age, are frequently told how smart they are. If a student is able to speak the alphabet forward and backward without any trouble, it is considered impressive and often praised in such a manner that focuses on the intelligence, not the work it took to learn to do so. Claudia M. Mueller and Carol S. Dweck (1998) conducted a study on fifth graders. They discovered that those fifth graders praised for intelligence "displayed less task persistence, less task enjoyment, more low-ability attributions, and worse task performance" once the students had failed (p. 33). Even though telling students how intelligent they are might boost their confidence, it shows a direct relationship with their performance; merely praising intelligence lowers overall academic performance.

Awards seem to be another common way to boost a student's confidence. Dweck (2007) believes we have "produced a generation of young people who can't get through the day without an award. They expect success because they're special, not because they've worked hard" (p. 34). This statement holds true with today's generation. Teachers are handing out awards too often to children who have done nothing to deserve them. Teachers need to educate children on the effects of hard work; rewards come from working hard, not from simply being present. Instead, teachers need to encourage the idea that if a student puts in every ounce of effort he or she possibly can, then that student will be rewarded. Giving up because it is 'too hard' or because they 'just don't want to' does not deserve a reward.

Praise for high ability is also a common response and an easy way to boost confidence. Why do we believe that it is good to praise someone who puts in no effort than to only praise someone who works diligently? While praising ability might be easier, Dale Schunk's (1982) experiment, which focused on children from 7 to 10 years old, proves that it is counterproductive. The experiment's results verified a correlation between praising effort and success. Telling children their hard work was the reason they progressed reinforced the idea that they can "actualize their capabilities through effort" (p. 549). Schunk's studies indicate that determination will allow for success in the long run.

Success, however, does not come without struggle. In order to adequately teach students to push through adversity, teachers need to first focus on two different kinds of mindsets: fixed and growth. A fixed mindset causes complications when it comes to a student's learning. Students with fixed mindsets will avoid challenging tasks they could potentially fail at and focus on tasks that will ensure their success (Dweck, 2007, p. 34). Those students who become too concerned with how smart they are become limited. Teachers need to motivate students in their work, not in one particular subject, but in all subjects. Students who start out believing they cannot do something will ultimately fail; students who believe that they can work hard enough to push through will ultimately succeed.

Students need to be well rounded and knowledgeable in more areas than just the areas teachers have told them they are good at. That is where the growth mindset comes in, and this is what educators need to impart onto their students. The growth mindset allows students to care more about learning and working hard, rather than giving up at the first sign of difficulty (Dweck, 2007, p. 35). Students need to be motivated and confident

in their beliefs that they can push past those first signs of struggle.

One of the hardest things to do as a teacher is find to what motivates students. At a young age, children are often rewarded for their work with candy, or more time on the playground. However, if there is a way that will motivate students to work harder in a more positive manner, would it not be more effective to use it?

Teachers need to take into account age and the fact that there is a difference between children and young adults. Children at young ages still have malleable minds, children are easily influenced and therefore changing the way a child thinks is not as difficult as changing the way a young adult thinks. When children grow older, however, they become more susceptible to emotional hardships. Bandura (1997) found that "Student's beliefs about their efficacy to manage academic task demands can also influence them *emotionally* by decreasing their stress, anxiety, and depression" (p. 86). In high school, especially, this is a relevant issue. High school students are often prone to academic pressure as well as social pressure. For a teacher, one of the more important goals should be to reduce academic stress by instilling that sense of self confidence and ability at a young age, as well as encouraging it throughout high school.

Encouraging students to work hard does not simply apply in the academic field. Students who are properly conditioned to work hard will not only carry that trait in an academic setting, but also into professional, social, and athletic settings. Students who show a higher sense of self efficacy convey a positive correlation in students' "activity choices, effort, persistence, and emotional reaction," but it also proves that students' "self-beliefs about academic capabilities do play an essential role in their motivation to achieve" (Zimmerman & Bandura, 1981, p. 82).

If teachers, truly want to introduce characteristics that will resonate with students for the rest of their lives, they need to focus on how to properly commend students on their work. Educators should emphasize the amount of effort a student puts into an assignment rather than how their intelligence lets them coast on by. It is easy to focus on a student's intellect, but at some point intellect will not carry a student through and he or she will have to rely on something more than the brainpower he or she has always had.

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Reviewing Previous Learning
Katy Cook

In today's society, schools require a great deal of curriculum jam packed into a single school year, thus forcing teachers to rush through material simply to get every topic covered. In the long run, this is often not helpful for students and ultimately will not allow them to absorb as much knowledge as they can. In an effort to ensure that students are learning to the best of their ability and retaining the information, teachers should be considering spending an adequate amount of time reviewing previous material before they jump ahead into more complex lessons. This one simple step may seem repetitive and unnecessary, but it has the potential to make a noticeable difference in one's learning.

With a year in elementary school being so chalked full of crucial information that students may be referencing for the rest of their school career, it is essential that they are able to grasp a firm understanding before moving on. It is most beneficial for a student to be able to connect new information with previous learning, and by spending a small yet significant amount of time focusing on this idea, students will be able to better understand any new material they are being taught (Meyer). Subsequently, students who do not find themselves able to successfully recall the previous learning they have done are oftentimes more susceptible to falling behind and not completely grasping new concepts (Strangman & Hall, 2004). Therefore, it can be said that spending time going over basic learning will prove to not be a waste of time but rather crucial for effective learners.

Many schools follow a nine month school year starting in late August to early September and continuing through late May or early June. This gives students a three month period of break before starting their next year and students often spend this break lounging around and enjoying the nice weather and time off while they can. This undoubtedly takes a toll on their memory and students are likely to return to school in the fall, unable to fully recall everything they were taught their previous year. The retaining (or lack thereof) of previous learning has the ability to facilitate how the student will perform from there on out (Meyer, 2003). If a student finds themselves falling behind, he or she may potentially lose faith in themselves and continue to perform at a lower standard than they are capable of. In addition to the toll that this mindset will take on a student's schoolwork, it could also be detrimental to the student's attitude about school in general. Students who are constantly falling behind and finding themselves disappointed with their performance may develop a hatred towards the idea of attending school altogether. Loss of interest and motivation to do well academically are one of the major causes affecting student dropout rate and a teacher spending more time in the classroom reviewing material to make sure students are all on the same page could help the rate of dropouts decrease.

As Michael J. Prince and Richard M. Fedler explain, there are two main types of learning and both of them rely on the foundation of knowledge that a student has learned in the past (2006). In order to develop knowledge even further, it is exponentially important for the student to have a solid foundation and confidence in their previous understanding before they further their education. If the necessary steps in order to do this are not acted on, it may hinder a student's ability to intake and process more complex knowledge for the rest of their life (Michael J. Prince and Richard M. Fedler). Elementary years focus on basic material such as reading, writing, and simple math and science that will be referenced and built onto in years to come. Elementary are the most crucial years in a student's learning career and as a teacher it is expected and necessary to work to the best of your ability to provide a solid base of knowledge at this time. By focusing on reviewing all previous learning before advancing, teachers will be one step closer to providing the most effective and helpful education for their students.

Spending a considerable amount of time reviewing the material that students are already responsible for having learned may seem repetitive and potentially a waste of time, but in the long run this one simple step can play a big role in a student's future schooling career. Not only will they be more likely to have a complete understanding of the previous learning, but they will also develop and grasp future ideas more efficiently. Having a solid understanding of material will allow kids to do better in school and has the potential to keep students from dropping out and developing a negative attitude about their learning.

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The Importance of Classroom Design
Samantha Thomsen

The first thing you notice when walking into a classroom - especially an elementary classroom - is how it looks and how it is set up. Although it may not seem very important, the design of a classroom is crucial to a student's education. The design of the classroom affects student behavior and work ethic. There are many elements to consider when designing a classroom, but three very important ones are the effects of furniture arrangement, the opportunities activity centers bring, and the importance of a literature center.

Furniture arrangement in the classroom has a great effect on student behavior. According to Zifferblatt (1972), there is a direct correlation between student behavior and furniture arrangement in the classroom. He discovered that the most effective arrangement was desk clusters of 2-3 desks, the teacher's desk in a corner, and distinct separations of different areas in the classroom. The desk clusters worked well because it gave the students a chance to interact with one another while still being able to stay on task and pay attention to the teacher. The teacher's desk being in the corner was effective because the teacher was not able to give instructions from his or her desk. The teacher moved around the classroom a great deal, making sure all his or her attention was on the students. Just as the students need to be free from distractions to give their full attention to the teacher, the teacher needs to be giving all attention to the students, without being distracted by other tasks. Another idea to consider when thinking about furniture arrangement is the lesson for the day. If the teacher has a lesson planned that is more geared towards discussion, arranging the desks in a circle would be very helpful. The circle arrangement helps promote on-task oral input from students (Black, 1985). This arrangement creates a more open environment in which students feel more comfortable sharing their thoughts and ideas with their peers. It also creates a more focused environment because the students know they are expected to participate and they want to give on

task comments. Having distinct separations of areas in the classroom is important because it makes it more difficult for students to get distracted from doing the task at hand. For example, if the students are sitting in their desks listening to a math lesson and all the toys for free time are in close vicinity to the desks, students will very likely want to go play with toys instead of listen to the teacher. If there is a barrier between these areas, such as a bookcase to act as a wall, the students will be more focused on the lesson being taught.

A second important element to designing a classroom is setting aside space for different activity centers. Activity centers are distinct areas designated for small themed activities. These centers allow students to explore their interests and find out what they like to do best. It is important for children to do this because they need to explore their options to see what they enjoy most so they can carry these skills and interests outside the classroom (Komendat, 2010). One example of an activity center could be a science center. This could have different activities such as planting seeds or observing change in a rotting apple. Another example of a center is an art center. Here kids could make crafts and art projects to express their issues and feelings. It really instills a sense of accomplishment in children when they can take pride in an art project they did themselves. Also, there could be a drama center where students can use their imagination to act out scenes and situations in the classroom. This can help special education students calm down and sort through their frustrations. For these activity centers to work effectively, the teacher should allow the students to explore the centers for around thirty minutes without any instructions. This self-guided time sparks creativity in the students' minds because they can choose what they want to do instead of being told (Komendat, 2010). With these activity centers, students get the opportunity to explore these subjects with a more hands-on approach. All of these centers give the children opportunities to

use their imagination and show their creativity. This makes it very fun for the students and leaves them wanting to learn more.

One activity center not mentioned above-yet perhaps the most important-is a literature or library area. It is important to expose children to reading and writing at an early age. Children who are read to on a daily basis have an easier time developing reading skills and often have a more complex vocabulary than their peers (Morrow, 1982). It is recommended that teachers have a library corner in their classroom to promote reading. This corner should have a shelf or two from which students can choose a book to read . It should also be in a quiet area, perhaps partially blocked off from the rest of the classroom. It also helps to make the reading area comfortable by putting beanbags or soft chairs there. All these elements make the reading space attractive and inviting to students. According to a study done by Morrow (1982) in which a library corner was added to a classroom that didn't have one prior, the use of literature by students during their free-play time increased after the addition of the library corner. This shows that giving the students a fun library corner and books to choose from increases their interest in literature and their use of it in every day life.

In conclusion, classroom design is very important and can affect students' behavior in the classroom. Different desk arrangements produce different behaviors from students. Activity centers can be very helpful in opening up opportunities for the students to be creative in many different subjects. It is important to get students involved with literature so they have an easier time with reading in their future. Students need to be in a classroom that is designed to benefit them by making sure there are minimal distractions and maximal opportunities for quality learning.

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Classroom Design
Sierra Hawkins

Every elementary classroom has the same basic things; desks, lights, displays of children's work, etc., but nobody ever thinks about how important these items really are. The layout of a classroom can be determined by numerous things and it is important to consider all of them. Whether there are physical perimeters such as the room size or uncontrollable factors like how many kids are placed in the room, there is always a solution to make the room work in the teachers favor. In an article by Black, Lambert and Rosenfield, they state a few factors that determine classroom design, such as because of "teachers' conceptions of their role, the conditions for learning, and the appropriate means for maintaining classroom control" (Black et al, 1985). There are a lot of factors that can be controlled by the classroom that an elementary school teacher might not even realize, such as behavior and studiousness.

The first important aspect of classroom design is the physical design of the room. The carpet, walls, and windows are all extremely influential, even though a teacher might not realize it. Barrett, Kobbacy, Moffat, and Zhang studied all of these things. They found that the most important things for the room were "naturalness," "individualization," and "appropriate level of stimulation" (Barrett et al, 2013). The light is a very important factor. It doesn't matter if it is natural light or artificial light; the more light there is the better. If there are windows in the classroom, they should be free of obstruction. The individualization pertains to how interesting the furniture is and what the zones of the classroom are. Students learned better in a classroom that was interesting yet simple and had very distinct areas where they knew exactly what would happen there and what was expected of them. The furniture should be comfortable and have interesting color and design. The carpet and wall color should also be thought about. According to Blades and Spencer, two editors of the book "Children & Their Environment: Learning, Using, and Designing

Spaces", "it is the room color (wall and floor) that plays the most important role" (Blades & Spencer, 2006). Natural colors create a relaxed atmosphere. Warm colors can make blood pressure and muscle activity higher, while cool colors do the opposite.

Another important element is the arrangement of the desks. This has been the most studied factor of classroom design. In a study by Black, Lambert and Rosenfield they determined that the different arrangements encourage different things. If you want a social classroom and for your students to interact more with each other, have the desks in a circle. If you want more "active involvement" in the classroom as a whole, put your desks into clusters. They also determined that placing the desks in rows, made the children more off task and distracted. They always had the teacher stationed at the front of the room, which helped the students to remember who the authority figure was.

In a study done by Kerschner and Pointon, they interviewed teachers and students and asked their opinions about their classrooms. Every teacher had their pupils arranged in some kind of grouping. Desk arrangement all depends on what attitude the teacher wants the classroom to have and the pedagogy of the teacher. The designer of the classroom, most likely the teacher, needs to keep in mind that the classroom should flow and not have any obvious restraints. The traffic should be able to move freely throughout the desks and the space of learning should be well defined. The blackboard, or other main teaching tool, should remain in the front of the desks and be able to be seen by all. A teacher always has the freedom to move the furniture and they should take advantage of it.

A final important aspect of classroom design is taking the kids into consideration. One teacher in the Kerschner and Pointon study said that her main goal of her classroom was to make the kids happy and comfortable. She let each child have their own things and they took pride in managing their belongings. Another teacher in that study gave the kids the say in what they wanted their room to look

like and pointed out that the kid's notice things a teacher might not. It is also a benefit to display kids' work and their progress. By implementing bulletin boards into a classroom and giving the students pride in their craftsmanship, it helps to build self-esteem and makes them work hard. In older classrooms, you can even have them help design and make the bulletin boards/displays.

In multiple studies it has been shown that classroom design influences the students. One study by Rivlin and Weinstein proved it. Students who were placed in an intentionally thought out and organized classroom "engaged in more manipulative activities and they also produced more complex work" (Blades & Spencer, 2006). It can also "communicate expectations for behavior" (Blades & Spencer, 2006) and if the students are acting up, the teacher might not realize that it could be because of the room arrangement. Teachers should keep in mind that there is no one right way, to organize a classroom. There are multiple ways to have a layout; it all depends on what the teacher wants the classroom to convey and their pedagogy.

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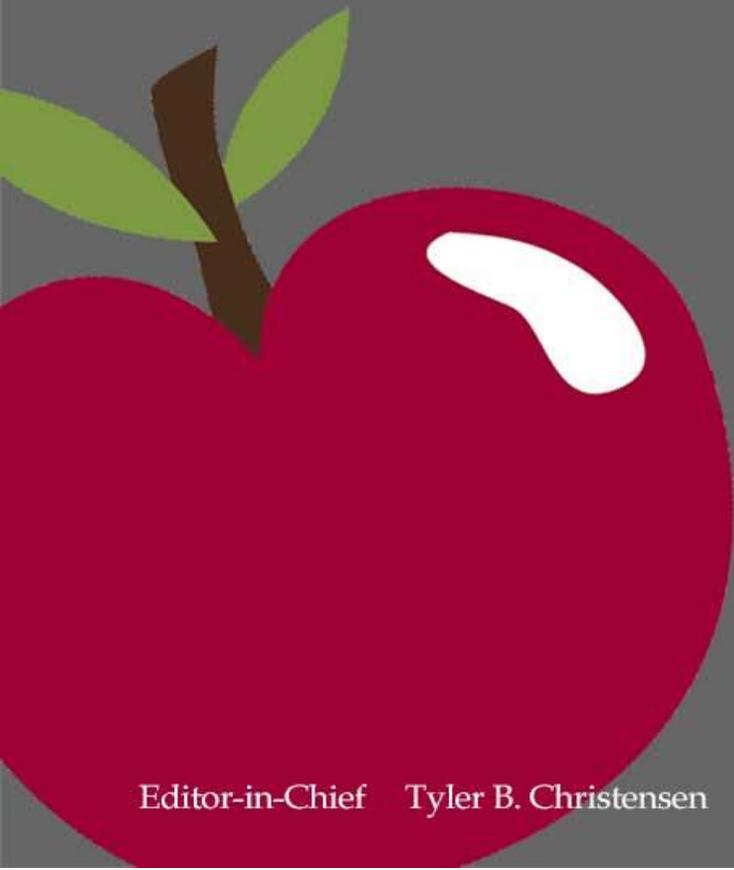
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