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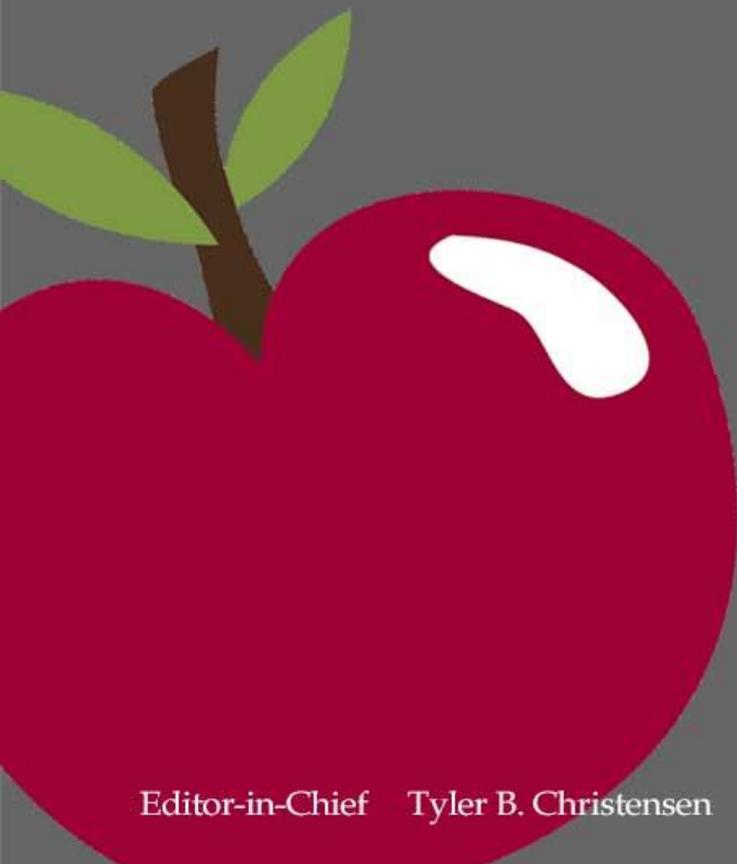
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# Being a Culturally Relevant Teacher

Ashley Schuler

**Abstract:** This paper is about how teachers should be more culturally relevant when it comes to teaching their students of different ethnicities, races, and cultures. Our schools are constantly increasing in diversity. Having the skills of incorporating students' cultures, ethnicities, languages, experiences, etc. into teachings is becoming more and more essential for student success. Being a culturally relevant teacher will help address all students and the different experiences and ideas they bring to the classroom.

**Key Words:** *Cultural Relevancy, Equity, Diversity, "What If", and socioeconomic status*

In order to increase a student's success rate and ability to learn, all teachers need to be culturally relevant. This is especially important in inner city and more diverse schools. According to Ladson-Billings (1995), teacher education programs have made it their main focus to prepare "teachers in ways that support equitable and just educational experiences for all students" (p. 466). Such programs of this kind of work exist in Alaska, California, Illinois, and Wisconsin. Using the culturally relevant theory of education, teachers can apply their students' cultures towards a productive way of connecting with their learning progress. If a teacher is aware of the background and culture of a student, they will be more understanding if a child is struggling when adjusting to the different methods of education. Not all cultures teach the same material and switching from one completely different way of learning to another can be hard on a student's abilities for obtaining needed information.

It is necessary for teachers to have the tools and information in order to successfully help students of different ethnicities feel comfortable in the different cultural settings. Teachers can apply their students' cultures towards a more productive way of connecting with their learning progress. In this particular article, Ladson-Billings (1995) wants to inform readers on the educational anthropological literature and suggest a new theoretical perspective to help teachers be more successful at enriching their African-American

students. Anthropologists have been able to prove that teaching has become more productive when teachers have a connection through the cultures of their students of color who haven't had great previous academic success. This type of a culturally appropriate connection can be incorporated into students' reading practices. An example of a tool for successful learning and academics is known as talk-story. This is when a teacher incorporates some familiarity, whether that is language or culture patterns, into preparing students for standardized reading tests.

Studies have shown that the subjects of literature and linguistics are a lot harder for students of different ethnicities to perform well in. Howard Tyrone's article "Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: Ingredients for Critical Teacher Reflection" (2003) reflects on the importance of teacher education literature. It says how critical reflection is recommended because then teachers can incorporate issues of equity and social justice into the teaching thinking and practice. It aims at persuading readers or teachers at becoming more culturally relevant. Howard argues that being culturally relevant is dependent when critically reflecting about the race and culture of your students.

Since the United States is the largest for having immigrants, the nation needs to prepare its citizens and especially teachers about the changing ethnics and demographics. Since the students of color are approximately one third of the U.S. school population, educators have to face the reality that they will come into contact with their students' cultures, ethnic backgrounds, languages, races, and social backgrounds that will be completely different from their own. To aid teachers with these changes, educators need to create learning spaces where teachers are prepared and are provided the skills to help teach these more diverse students. The teachers need to be aware that race, ethnicity, and culture shape the learning experience of their students. Their lesson plans have to be relevant to the students' cultures.

There is a direct correlation between teacher effort and student success. According to Lisa Delpit (2013) and her article "Warm Demanders", she interviewed "a group of African American

men who were successful, but should not have been, based on their socioeconomic status, communities, and their parents' level of education" (p. 2). This article written explains how Delpit has visited a few poor schools that are predominantly African American and have received a fantastic level of education. Their success was due to a select few of their teachers efforts at pushing them to perform their best in school and encouraging them by saying they could do what anyone else could do. She continues to elaborate that teachers continue to push and "demand" that their students keep trying, even when the teacher themselves can't. These low-income teachers are aware that their students need the extra push because they are dependent on school.

Typically, students from lower academic schools can't help being a little slower or less motivated when it comes to learning. They are used to that environment. It all depends on the community they live in and what kind of environment they are being raised in. The sad thing is that not all teachers are aware of this and they don't tend to try as hard when it comes to their slower students. Success rates of students can have a negative effect on teacher effort. Low-income teachers should know that the less fortunate students are dependent on their schools to teach them everything in order to be successful. This isn't always the case though, especially in low performance schools. Delpit visited two public elementary schools in a southern city that served very low-income African American children. One school had high-test score and the other had low-test scores due to the quality and efforts of their teachers. If the teachers don't care about their students then the success of their students will plummet. The culture of the school determines the effectiveness of teaching and learning. It is a domino effect. If the teacher doesn't have motivation to teach the students because of the culture then the student will won't have the motivation to learn. It should be a main priority for educators across the nation to establish this concept, so teachers can help their students learning rates increase.

In another article, Erin Miller (2010) talks about the "If Only" mindset. This "If Only" mentality is the thought that if only the parents and families of the students I taught changed, schools and teachers could serve their children

better. This is a backwards and unrealistic way of thinking. It is not always a lack of the parents caring for a student to have success. There are several other negative stereotypical "If Onlys". Some are "The parents of poor students don't value education" and "parents of poor students will spend money on nice cars, but not on books" (p. 2). There isn't one parent who doesn't care somewhat for their child and their education. If they are from a different culture, they might not have the resources. Those resources could be money, education/knowledge of the subject, linguistic abilities, etc. Often they don't have the funds to give their child a good education. It would be a good idea for educators to think of ideas for fund raising. If students' families can't afford to give them a good quality education, then it is the job of the state and school board to take action and try to provide the best solutions. Language and reading is a very important learning ability for students of a different race and culture. Miller states his "If Only" mentality towards parents providing an authentic reading and writing experience at home and rely less on the "job" of the school to provide that curriculum.

Again it isn't always that simple. Several parents from a different culture weren't raised that way or don't know how to teach their child because they don't know the language well enough themselves. Educators need to be aware of this, so they can add extra practice and lessons for their students of different races and cultures. Some possible teaching positions could open up in this case. Hiring private tutors that are supplied by the schools or giving international or educationally challenged students the opportunity to have a classroom they can learn in based on their level of learning abilities. Educators need to stop thinking about the "What Ifs" and start thinking "What can I do to help".

What can we do as readers and future teachers to insure that our student's have all the capabilities of a higher-level education? We can persuade educators to provide their students with quality teachers who care about education in all forms. Teachers need to know about their students' backgrounds and abilities. The job of a teacher is to provide excellent insight and support for all different students. Those students could be of a different race, country, financial status, community, family support system, etc. It doesn't matter what background they have, all students

should be treated equally. This idea of equality relates getting rid of all parent biases. The "If Only" theory isn't something we should be thinking about once we are teachers. Teachers should be taught to think: "What can I do to improve my students success and ensure they are receiving the best education possible". All of these ideas relate back to being a culturally relevant teacher. Being aware of this concept earlier in your teaching career can help you decide what courses you take in college or practices you join. Since schools are constantly becoming more diverse over the years, teachers should be allowed to take additional courses to help them form strong relationships with students of different races and cultures. It would also be a good idea for teachers to take courses to learn about different cultures, courses for secondary languages, cultural histories, religions, etc. All of these articles have similar main ideas. The main idea is how important it is for a student, no matter what background they have, to receive a top grade education. The second point is to ensure that teachers know about students' backgrounds and incorporate those into their teaching styles and

methods. To ensure this, educators should supply their teachers with the necessary information and abilities to work with these kinds of situations. Ultimately, the student is the most important when it comes to all educators. All teachers and future teachers across the nation should know this and need to know this. Together we can make a difference in our students' lives and change the way education incorporates all learning abilities based off of all backgrounds.

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# A Strategy for Classroom Management Success

Rebecca Huth

**Abstract:** This paper showcases four published articles which cover strategies for classroom management tested by teachers. In the first article, Barbetta et al. (2005) provides examples of classroom management mistakes often made by teachers. The authors bring awareness to the role teachers play in contributing to classroom management success or failure and offer possible solutions. A major concern continually identified by teachers of all skill levels is classroom management, as identified in the second article by Bondy et al. (2007). Their study is based on the successful teaching practices of three novice teachers effective in urban elementary classrooms. It highlights the teachers' success managing students by creating a successful classroom environment. Mundschenk et al. (2011) focuses on guidance as the primary tool for effective classroom management by using the analogy of teachers as air traffic controllers. The analogy provides detailed steps for effective classroom management. In the final article, Reese, author and Music Educator, shares her successful classroom management practices (2007). Her philosophy includes commendation, communication, consistency and content. This paper joins these four articles together to provide teachers with a four step strategy for classroom management success.

**Keywords:** *behavioral strategies, student resilience, classroom management, classroom environment*

What I learned from observing a Kindergarten classroom of a first year teacher is that it is extremely hard for students to succeed at learning if there is not effective classroom management in place. The environment I observed was stressful for the teacher, negative for students, and overwhelming for me as the observer. What I took away from that experience is the need for a successful classroom management strategy in order to be an effective teacher. My goal is to provide my students with positive learning opportunities. With the increase of diversity and a variety of disorders, classroom management is more challenging than ever, regardless of whether a teacher is skilled or new. I have designed this teaching strategy for the success of both teachers and students. Through my research, I believe I have found four classroom management steps to serve as a platform for a positive classroom learning

experience. This platform includes awareness, environment, guidance and teaching philosophy. These four steps will give teachers of any skill level, the opportunity to teach effectively and promote student success.

## Teacher Awareness

The first strategy my research suggests for successful classroom management is the requirement of teacher awareness. In Barbetta et al.'s (2005) article, the authors provide examples of twelve classroom management mistakes often made by teachers, bringing awareness to the role teachers play in classroom management success or failure. They also include suggestions of replacements for these common teaching mistakes. One of the mistakes listed is *Violating the Principles of Good Classroom Rules*. Instead, they suggest teachers should *Follow the Guidelines for Classroom Rules*. This includes having four to six classroom rules which are simple, specific, clear and measurable. The rules should be posted, stated positively, introduced through role play, and reviewed periodically. Consistency in carrying out consequences when rules are not followed is mandatory for rules to hold value. Verbal praise should also be provided for additional reinforcement.

Another teacher mistake listed is *Inconsistent Expectations and Consequences*. Instead, Barbetta et al. suggests teachers *Have Clear Expectations That Are Enforced and Reinforced Consistently*. Rules serve no purpose if they are not understood or are not going to be enforced and reinforced. An additional mistake the authors list is *When an Approach Isn't Working, Try Harder* which refers to teachers making loud, disapproving statements, increasing negative consequences or removing more privileges. This actually increases negativity and scars the student-teacher relationship, leaving students feeling defeated. Instead, Barbetta et al. suggest to *Try Another Way*. When an approach isn't working, try another way, such as verbal redirecting, proximity control, changing the academic tasks or providing additional cues/prompts. These more positive approaches are more effective and simpler to use. As teachers, we need to be consistent, yet flexible. The research shows that some of the most challenging students, such as students with severe emotional and behavioral problems, often need the most

reinforcement, yet they often receive the least. This is another example of teacher awareness opening the door for prevention. Prevention is accomplished by focusing on teaching desired behaviors, having flexibility and working together. Prevention is monumental because it can lead to the elimination of negative classroom behavior (2005).

### **Creating the Proper Environment**

Eliminating as much disruptive behavior as possible is crucial to creating the correct environment for students to succeed. Disruptive behavior is more common than teachers would like. Bondy et al. (2007) states that classroom management is continually identified by teachers of all skill levels as a major concern. They also identify schools with students of diversity as posing the challenge of creating an environment that is both safe and productive. It is crucial to set boundaries with children and give them dependency and consistency with those boundaries. Teachers truly need to set the tone at the beginning of the school year unless they want their students consistently testing them the rest of the year. By providing boundaries, dependency and consistency, teachers provide the environment needed for successful classroom management. Bondy et al. focus their findings on literature on culturally responsive classroom management (CRCM), psychologically supportive classroom environments and building resilience. Their study is based on the effective teaching practices of three novice teachers in the first two hours of the first day of school in urban elementary classrooms.

This study highlights the teachers insisting on respectful behavior and creating a successful classroom environment as well as resilience for students who would generally struggle in school. This healthy environment is gained primarily by how these teachers set the tone in the first few hours of the first day of school followed by continued implementation and reinforcement. The two concepts these teachers focused on were *Developing Relationships* and *Establishing Expectations*. *Developing Relationships* involved a personal approach to teaching with students learning about each other, as well as learning about their teacher, and discussing why relationships are important. The teachers made developing relationships a priority because they felt relationships were at the core of a productive learning community. The study showed that “the teacher built a caring learning community where connections with and among the students created a safe place to learn and an emotional climate where

students could take risks, laugh, and trust one another and their teacher” (Bondy et al., 2007). In regard to *Establishing Expectations*, one teacher worked with her students to develop rules, whereas the other two had predetermined rules. The word “rules” refers to normal expected behavior, such as “be respectful” and “follow rules when given”. Regardless of who makes the rules, teaching rules and procedures set the stage for success. The teachers “established and communicated clear, high expectations with an attitude of ‘no excuses’” (Bondy 2007). Over the next few days, the teachers emphasized expectations and repeatedly returned to the rules. Although the teachers introduced rules and procedures within the first two hours of school, they clarified that over the next few weeks they would continue to go over rules and consequences to get the students into a routine.

### **Providing Guidance**

In addition to creating the proper class environment, teachers are responsible for providing students with guidance. Mundschenk et al. (2011) use the analogy of the teacher as an air traffic controller for effective classroom management. This article addresses the challenges of classroom management when attempting to hold all students academically accountable, including those with emotional or behavioral disorders. The reality is, teachers are responsible for handling a broader scope of behaviors. Challenges come into place, not just in managing students with disorders, but also in holding the other students accountable. Students may play the “it’s not fair” card when seeing students with disorders being treated with different expectations; however teachers can’t allow students without disorders the option to slack in their academic integrity. Teachers need to respond effectively and efficiently to disruptive behaviors and also be aware that their own behavior could reinforce inappropriate behavior (2011).

Students need guidance, which is why the authors’ analogy of teachers being air traffic controllers is very appropriate. The analogy provides steps for effective classroom management including: preparing a flight plan, ensuring a smooth flight and bringing them in safely. *Preparing a flight plan* includes setting clear limits as to what pilots (students) can do and where they can go, which is essential for behavior management. Teachers should take the classroom environment in consideration and establish a clear, quiet runway (classroom) so pilot concentration can begin. For *ensuring a smooth flight*,

teachers should use a calm, controlled voice like air traffic controllers would, even under stressful conditions. Words directed at students should be concise and specific. Self-monitoring should also be taught so students can track their own behavior or academic performance over time, allowing teacher and students to be more productive. *Bring them in safely*, discusses using a holding pattern. The holding pattern includes having a game plan for removing students needing to be removed before they become too agitated and a disruption to the class. The authors also specify to *match the runway*, which means avoid having unreasonable expectations. Set achievable behavior boundaries for students. This can make teaching easier and give students a sense of accomplishment. Classroom teachers don't control student behavior; they guide students to promote learning (2011).

### Implementation of a Simple Philosophy for Success

Promoting learning is the goal of every teacher and achievable when successful classroom management is in place. In the article by Reese (2007), who happens to be a Music Educator, Reese shares her four Cs of classroom management: *Commendation, Communication, Consistency and Content*. These represent a quick, successful way to establish a safe, healthy and fun environment, especially in elementary schools. *Commendation* is essentially making an individual connection with each student. An example would be praising a student by commending them by name for positive behavior. Acknowledging positive behavior, even if it was something seemingly small, can lead to a positive environment for the entire classroom. *Communication* skills include enforceable statements and an opportunity to refocus and be in control of their own choices. It is important to avoid humiliating students exhibiting negative behavior- be respectful to them as you want them to be to you. Rather than commanding, communicate with the student with enforceable statements such as "I can see that you are excited to share. We will listen when you are ready to raise your hand to be called on". *Consistency* includes continually referring back to the rules and maintaining consistency of these rules. *Content* involves mapping successful lesson plans, providing focused minimal down time and keeping students engaged with the lesson. When a child displays regular unwanted behavior, communicate

with parents to collaborate toward a more successful learning experience for the child. When successful implementation of the four Cs is achieved, fewer disruptions will occur and more learning will be accomplished (2007).

### Conclusion

One of the biggest problems teachers of all experience levels struggle with is classroom management. As I witnessed in my kindergarten class observation, if a teacher cannot manage their classroom, the experience can be complete chaos for both the teacher and the students. Sadly, minimal learning will be achieved. Yet isn't that the reason why we become teachers and the goal of every teacher - to teach students and help them learn? Teaching requires being flexible and learning from others. Unfortunately, teaching also generally involves being responsible for an entire classroom of students by yourself. This means there are no other adults directly in the classroom to learn from or assist the teacher when situations arise. By incorporating multiple research into one strategy, I believe I have a platform for classroom management success. Teachers and students can look forward to less stress and more academic success. With these four steps: teacher awareness, creating the proper environment, providing guidance and implementation of the 4 Cs philosophy, I have equipped myself with the tools necessary to help my classroom achieve academic success and reduce stress. I encourage other teachers to equip themselves with this strategy as well, if not for themselves, for their students.

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# Co-teaching: The Benefits and Disadvantages

Emily Stark

**Abstract:** By adding another teacher in the classroom students are able to get more attention they need along with the teacher feeling less pressure of having to do all the work by themselves. There are many issues in co-teaching like lack of time to prepare, teachers not being educated on co-teaching, and not having the right pair of teachers working together. These are all small road blocks that could be easily fixed like having co-teaching meetings one morning a week, but the most beneficial thing would be to pair a general teacher with a special education teacher. Involving a special educator in the classroom along with the general teacher in secondary education and allowing them the same prep-hour to prepare for class will be very beneficial for the classroom. Not only will individualized learning be increased for students, but it will also improve their skill and performance on standardized tests.

**Key words:** *Co-teaching, students, development, and special education*

There are many reasons why teachers leave the profession and one is because many feel overwhelmed with all the time spent planning for the next class or preparing another class activity. The overwhelmed and run-down feelings could all be fixed with one simple solution, co-teaching. When it comes to teaching with another co-worker some teachers find excitement, while others find it very uncomfortable. This should not be an issue when it comes to teaching students. All teachers should be able to work in a cooperative setting or in other words co-teach, when it comes to any situation. There have been many studies for co-teaching and many have realized the benefits, but also the drawbacks. Co-teaching should not be seen as negative, but a positive way for teachers to interact with one another and also give more individualized attention to students.

## Advantages of Co-Teaching

There are many different ways that co-teaching could be executed. For example, it could be two general education teachers, one general education teacher and a special education teacher, or even a special education teacher and an administrator (Magieri & Zigmond, 2005 p. 80-81). There have been many different ways to co-teach, but one that has

seemed beneficial in many situations has been a general education teacher paired with a special education teacher (Mastropieri, Scruggs, Graetz, Norland, Gardizi, & Mcduffie, 2005, p. 267). With this co-op, there are clear roles between the two and as they work together longer and longer over the years they will be able to form a bond and be able to form an effective co-teaching regimen for the classroom. This allows both teachers to work off of each other to form a cohesive way of teaching that benefits not only special education students, but also the general student population.

Having this pairing of teachers allows the general education teacher to teach in a style that is comfortable for them and having a special education teacher with them allows someone else to simplify or allow children with disabilities to learn in a way that is helpful for them. One example that is demonstrated in the article, *Case Studies in Co-Teaching in the Content Areas: Successes, Failures, and Challenges* by Margo A. Mastropieri, Thomas E. Scruggs, Janet Graetz, Jennifer Norland, Walena Gardizi, and Kimberly Mcduffie, which is a case study that shows a chemistry class with two women that were studied for a year and were allowed to co-teach in a way that was effective for the teachers and students.

These two women at first were very shaky in managing the new style of co-teaching, which is seen as normal when it comes to first co-teaching experiences, but through out the years they spent together they were able to mold their two styles together to form a class that was beneficial for everyone. These teachers followed the basic rules of, "(a) teachers presented information to the class as a whole; (b) teachers reviewed the textbooks, major points or text-based chapter questions, and lab activities with the class as a whole; (c) teachers occasionally assigned longer-term more project-based activities; and (d) tests and quizzes were administered on a regular basis" (Mastropieri, Scruggs, Graetz, Norland, Gardizi, & Mcduffie, 2005, p. 267). Through out this class there was a lot of group work and many other times where students were able to work on their own so this allowed teachers to talk and discuss how things were going and what to prepare for in the future along with many other things (Mastropieri, Scruggs, Graetz, Norland, Gardizi, & Mcduffie, 2005, p. 266).

### Disadvantages of Co-Teaching

There have been many great outcomes from co-teaching, but there have also been some situations that have not worked out so well. There was another case study performed with two general education teachers that emphasized on middle school social studies. At the beginning of this study there were two teachers that had two very different teaching styles, which reflected in the classroom. When the class was observed, "At the beginning of the year, this classroom appeared to have little structure in place" (Mastropieri, Scruggs, Graetz, Norland, Gardizi, & Mcduffie, 2005, p. 265). This caused the classroom to split through out the school year and teach half the class in one teaching style and the other half in a different way. This proved that two teachers with the same degree, but different teaching styles were not good examples for co-teaching. There has to be a balance between both teachers to be effective in a classroom and they also have to have close to or the same type of teaching style for the teachers to mesh.

Another problem that occurs in co-teaching is that there is a lot more planning and preparation that is involved for class the next day and very little time for teachers to work together (Mastropieri, Scruggs, Graetz, Norland, Gardizi, & Mcduffie, 2005, p. 262-263). Especially with teachers that are involved in other things after school like coaching or tutoring it can be very difficult for teachers to find time during school or after school to collaborate on what to do for the next day or week of the school year. This causes teachers to give up more of their free time that they have available to preparing for class with another co-worker. After a year of this teachers could become run down or over whelmed with the amount of time they are working and the small paycheck they are receiving in return.

Co-teaching also requires extra classes to get teachers prepared for this new way of teaching, which many teachers do not want to do because it requires more hours for them along with more preparation (Magiera, & Zigmond, 2005, p. 82, Murawski, & Dieker, 2004, p.54). This really deters many teachers from being put into a co-teaching situation because of all the extra classes and time and preparation that they have to do when one can simply stick to what they know and prepare their class the way they want instead of trying to mold two different styles. When a teacher decides to teach by

him or herself they miss on some opportunities to work with students that may be having troubles with the content. Since teachers on average have thirty kids in a classroom one teacher can only do so much by themselves. Having another helping hand would be helpful in this situation.

### Conclusion

Although there are some negatives to co-teaching, many more positives have come from it. Through co-teaching students are given extra attention, teachers are able to work with a co-worker, and not all the pressure is put onto one individual person. Right now teachers are hesitant to join with one another, but with time and making co-teaching very prominent through school districts teachers will find this style of teaching very useful for everyone across the board. Especially when a special education teacher and general education teacher are put together amazing progress can occur because every single student across the board is able to get the attention that they need to be successful in school. Due to this students will feel more confident when taking any type of testing that they need to. Co-teaching could become a life long learning experience for not only the student, but also the teachers because many new ways of co-teaching could be developed and more efficient teaching styles could be mad

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# Cooperative Learning in Classrooms Today

Joclyn Pierce

**Abstract:** The purpose of this paper is to shed light onto the cooperative learning method in the classroom. This paper includes much information from studies that have looked at classrooms who have adopted cooperative learning groups, and studies show how this method affects student's learning. There is much information presented about the positives of being in a small diverse group and how these groups help students develop social skills, identity roles, and help students develop goal setting as well. Many researchers question if cooperative learning is the way to go in the classroom, especially when the world is such a competitive place and is a "fend for yourself" environment, but much research shows that there are plenty of positive effects this learning style has on students in the grade area of Kindergarten through twelfth grade.

**Key Words:** *Teamwork, Group Projects, Team-Learning*

Throughout every student's academic career, there will always be times when teachers assign group projects. Some students love group projects, while others would rather just work by themselves. With every learning method come positive and negative effects. With cooperative learning there are different rewards and different ways of achieving rewards. The one criticism of cooperative learning is that for once, students do not have to compete nearly as much as they would if they did individual work, and we all live in such a competitive world that many researchers wonder if it is positive on students development or not (Alfiie, 1992). Many researchers believe that there are far more positives outweighing this negative idea about cooperative learning.

The American society we live in today is competitive in almost every aspect. "Competition is so pervasive, in fact--infecting the workplace and the classroom, the playing field and the family--that many of us take it for granted, failing to notice its destructive consequences" (Kohn, 1992). So many schools have become competitive as well, regardless of the grade level. With group work, researchers have found that students do not put as much blame on themselves if they receive a bad grade. Group work is a team effort, so one person cannot be blamed for the failure of a project. This creates a teamwork environment in any classroom. Within these small

groups students are able to find their strong points and contributions, rather than their shortcomings in working alone.

One great thing about cooperative learning is that there is no basic cooperative learning method. Teachers do not have to make small groups to only do projects; teachers can have other activities lined up for groups. There are four main models that teachers base cooperative learning styles on; they include, Teams-Games-Tournament (TGT) Student Teams-Achievement Divisions (STAD), Jigsaw, and Small Group Teaching (Slavin, 1980). These four structures allow teachers to be able to form small groups of about four students to get different tasks done, and the focus is not only on group projects, but can focus on helping students build bonds and create a team.

With Teams-Games Tournament (TGT) students are able to work together, study, and have some fun. "Students are assigned to teams according to a procedure that maximizes heterogeneity of ability levels, sex, and race" (Slavin, 1980). With this method teachers feel that they are giving their students a chance to go out and be with students who they would not normally choose for a group. This creates diversity in the classroom and as well as into student's lives. In this model students are able to sit together gather information from a lecture, finally they are able to take in the information and start prepping for tournaments of trivia. There are usually tables that are numbered usually from 1-5, each group is split amongst the tables, the more questions a student answers correctly, the more that student will move up. Whichever student succeeds to the highest table for an amount of time, wins for his or her team. So students are setting goals to get to the higher tables.

Student Teams- Achievement Divisions (STAD) uses the same diverse groups as Teams-Games Tournament, but instead of these fun tournaments there would be small quizzes for each team to take. This focuses on what the group learned rather than going off and doing individual work. Jigsaw is another method that uses these same exact groups. With Jigsaw, groups are expected to take small sections of content, learn it, and figure out a way to teach it to other groups. So with this students are pieces of the puzzle, and no one can get a full picture of what they are learning without one another. This

strategy seems to be very helpful to many students because they are relying on each other. Small- Group Teaching is a lot like Jigsaw but it is more in depth than just reading different parts of the classroom book. Students are given subtopics, students with the same subtopic come together and pick even smaller parts of the subtopic and they prepare to teach their information to the class. So this is much like Jigsaw, students are still relying on one another. All four of these groups have something in common; they are all composed of diverse groups.

There are many younger students in every classroom that are not introduced to any sort of diversity until they become school age. There have been many issues with violence in schools because of diversity. Many teachers feel the need to introduce diversity at a young age, so when these students get older they will not have such a "culture shock" when they go into the world. Cooperative learning is a great way for students to come face to face with students of different race, religion, and social class, and with this learning method they are forced to rely on the people they may have never chose as their partners. There have been studies that have reported positive cross-racial friendships, because of cooperative learning activities, not only in the classroom, but outside as well (Oishi, 1983). This should give teachers motives to put this strategy in their classroom to benefit students socially and cognitively.

This method has one of the most diverse outcomes. Students are able to work face to face with their peers and figure out their strongpoints and what they have to offer as a team member. Some of the many "diverse outcomes include, achievement, higher-level reasoning, retention, time on task, transfer of learning, achievement motivation, intrinsic motivation, continuing motivation, social and cognitive development, moral reasoning, perspective-taking, interpersonal attraction, social support, friendships, reduction of stereotypes and prejudice, valuing differences, psychological health, self-esteem, social competencies, internalization of values, the quality of the learning environment, and many other outcomes" (Johnson, 2000). With these many other outcomes, found by researchers, people can see why teachers would want to implement this style of learning in their classroom.

With cooperative learning, students are finally not alone during class time. Teachers often find that students become scared or embarrassed to ask

questions during lecture, so this student will never receive an answer if a question is not asked. Cooperative groups help make students feel much more comfortable asking questions to one another rather than asking in front of all of their peers. Many students in these groups will start to form identities as well. There will be some natural leaders, and others that just go along with everything, but everyone has a job in a cooperative group. Many students like this style as well because it is a lot like a sports team, and many students either play sports or enjoy sports in general, and the team members all have to work together to get the job done.

Researchers have found so many positive outcomes of this style of learning, and are continuing to study the positive outcomes that this learning style has on both teacher and students. This is one of the most social ways of learning for students. There is a time for students to build a team rather than just focusing on themselves. Students have a chance to teach and become "masters" of specific information. Friendships starts with cooperative learning and social skills develop more as well. Cooperative learning has proved to work for many teachers in diverse classrooms, and will hopefully continue to grow and become more popular in other teacher's classroom. Making students feel more comfortable in social situations and helping them find their role in a group can prepare students for the world.

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# A Teacher's Guide to Giving Effective Feedback

Abigail Aasen

**Abstract:** The purpose of this paper is to discuss the importance of teachers giving students feedback in the classrooms. Specifically, this paper examines studies done on student feedback including if it should be given, when it should be given, and how it should be given. This paper proposes a specific plan for a classroom including the type of feedback to use in test situations and content practice situations (for example learning spelling words or math facts). Feedback helps students make corrections in their work and allows them to see where they stand versus what the teacher would like students to learn in any specific lesson or unit. Although student feedback is already widely used, there is a question of how it can be done more effectively to assist in the retention aspect of a students' learning. Types of feedback are reviewed and compared to show which methods yield better results. The examples in this paper include results from studies involving the improvement of math and writing skills through feedback made to improve student accuracy and set goals.

**Keywords:** *student feedback, effective feedback, IFAT forms, elementary students, retention*

In elementary schools, teachers have goals and expectations that students are expected to meet. Receiving a report card is an obvious indicator of how teachers give an account of a student's progress in the classroom. Sometimes this can be a shock for both students and their parents. That is why it is essential to give frequent and constructive feedback to students. This feedback provides students with a clear view of where they are on any topic or concept and it can be an indicator of the level they are expected to be at (Shute, 2008). Without this feedback it is harder to comprehend objectives, make corrections, and retain the necessary information. This paper will explore why teachers should give student feedback, how feedback should be administered, and when student feedback is most effectively given.

## Why should student feedback be given?

In a study done by Chandler reported in the *Journal of Second Language Writing* students receive feedback on writing assignments over the course of a semester. All of the subjects were music majors from East Asia. The course the study focused on was

geared towards improving English (as a second language) in writing. Half of the students writing autobiographies were given feedback and half were not. Those non-feedback students were only given a grade. The research concluded that students given feedback made less errors in future papers than the group of students who received no feedback (Chandler, 2003).

## How should feedback be given?

A second study was done for the same course with a different group of similar students to determine which type of feedback was most effective in creating a higher English accuracy in the papers. The first option was direct correction where the teacher edited the mistakes and showed the correct way to write a specific sentiment. Other options were a description of why the error was wrong, underlining only the error, or a combination of underlining and describing what the errors were. Data showed that the student group who received feedback in the form of direct correction improved the most. Direct correction was "fastest and easiest for [the students] to revise" (Chandler, 2003, 291). However, in a survey given to students they responded that they preferred underlining with the description because it helped them learn their mistakes and how to fix them more effectively (Chandler, 2003). So, although direct correction was the fastest way for students to improve their writing there is no evidence that they understood the fixes they were making enough to claim that they learned better from that form of feedback. Students preferred underlining with a description even though statistics showed that correction was most effective in curbing future mistakes. A teacher has to decide if it is more important to give feedback in a way that the students feel helps them learn best, or trust the statistics and give a more direct form of correction.

These studies were done in college classrooms but it is still very relevant and applicable to any level of classroom. In elementary schools it is important to decide if the speed of improvement is most important or if the most important thing is to make the students feel that they truly understand the errors they have made. This decision is complicated by the fact that direct correction seems to be the most

effective although it is not preferred by the students studied.

### **When is student feedback most effectively given?**

We have all had experiences at some point in our lives where we waited endlessly for test results or had text anxiety from not knowing how an exam will result. Teachers need time to properly correct work sheets, tests, and essays along with working on making lessons for the next day. Sometimes by the time students receive their test scores back they have forgotten the test almost entirely including which questions they struggled with most and which ones they were confident in. After such a long period of time, students become less curious about their mistakes and may be only concerned with their percentage overall or if they earned a good job sticker on their work. Additionally, it is stressful when an answer is marked wrong without being told the right answer. To remedy these concerns it is important to give corrective and immediate feedback whenever possible.

To examine the real importance of feedback in 2006, Roberta Dihoff studied elementary school students and noted how different types of feedback affected math progress. Two groups of forty students were observed. One group tested normally achieving in math and the other tested Math Learning Disability (MLD). These two groups were each split into four categories that would determine what type of feedback each student received. The options were the Scantron group (where students filled in bubbles with no feedback), the delayed feedback group (where students who were finished with the test were able to look over correct answers compared to their own), and a verbal feedback group (where the teacher told the testing student whether or not their answer was correct and then asked them to make another choice if it was incorrect). The final and most interesting group was the Immediate Feedback Assessment Technique (IFAT) form group. Using this method, students scratch off their answer A, B, C, or D on an answer sheet and a star indicates a correct answer once scratched off. If an incorrect first answer is chosen the student had two more chances to answer the question correctly.

Dihoff's results showed that groups who received immediate feedback by either IFAT or immediate verbal feedback showed more improvement. This was observed in the normally achieving group and especially in the MLD group. These results support the method of making feedback immediate when possible (Dihoff, 2006).

Naturally, it is almost never practical for one teacher to individually give verbal feedback on correct and incorrect answers to every student in his or her classroom. The IFAT form is a very interesting and effective way to especially help students who are struggling with a concept. I can testify for this method because I have participated in this form of testing as a student. It is very helpful for students to recognize being on the right track when taking a test and the IFAT forms help to boost confidence and bring down levels of post-test anxiety. The stress of not knowing results is removed because of the immediate feedback.

### **Recommended Method for Feedback**

First and foremost student feedback should definitely be given whenever possible because it reduces future errors. Secondly, feedback should be given in a way that is both time effective and boosts student's confidence in their learning. Just because direct correction is the fastest to revise does not always indicate higher levels of student comprehension. "Feedback can promote learning if it is received mindfully, but it can inhibit learning if it encourages mindlessness" (Salomon and Globerson, 1987; Bangert-Drowns et al, 1991). Lastly, feedback should be given immediately whenever possible to keep students interested in the result of their work and learning, boost confidence, and create a more helpful testing environment. Teachers should give students feedback as often as possible to let students know where they stand. Of course the method of feedback will have to be flexible to the needs of different classes through the years of teaching. Based on these studies, the use of IFAT whenever practical, and correcting by underlining and describing the error, will likely be the most effective ways of giving feedback to students.

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# Independent Resolution: A Guide to False Conflict in Children

Reese Madlem

**Abstract:** The intent of this article is to help teachers and child care providers in assisting children to identify situations that do not require adult intervention and resolve their own false conflict.

**Key terms:** *False conflict, conflict resolution, cooperation, teamwork*

“Teacher, he won’t stop staring at me.” “She’s following me.” “They are being too noisy.” As teachers we are always receiving information about the big problems at school: the pushing and shoving, name calling and, of course, bullying. Rarely do we get tips on handling the everyday problems we hear many times throughout the day. Most of these situations do not necessitate teacher intervention, but the children do not have the tools necessary to achieve their desired result. Here I have compiled helpful information, suggestions and activities to help teach children how to resolve small conflicts on their own.

Many conflicts that we deal with every day fall into Morton Deutsch’s category of False Conflict. This is where there is no objective basis for a conflict at all. This occurs when there is misperception or misunderstanding. (Conflict Research Consortium Staff, 2015) While the information you will find here are helpful in all kinds of conflict, this will be my main focus.

Picture a scenario in which children are having free play in the gym: There are some kids playing with basketballs, a handful playing floor hockey with everyone else scattered about the edges jumping rope, bouncing balls, or playing catch. Everything is going fine when suddenly the unthinkable happens: a basketball bounces into “Mary” who is playing hockey. You know what comes next; “Teacher, “Vinny” threw his basketball at me!”

Time and time again I find myself in situations just like this. My first question is always the same, “Did Vinny throw the ball at you, or do you think

it might have been an accident?” Nine times out of ten Mary will tell me it was an accident, in which case I ask Mary if she thought Vinny *knew* that his ball hit her.

Let’s pretend Vinny knew the ball hit Mary. A short conversation with both children will take place. I can’t count how many “Vinny’s” I have had to teach that it is polite to apologize for an accident even if no one got hurt. I can tell you this: it’s the same amount of “Mary’s” I have had to teach that an apology isn’t *always* necessary.

Now let’s pretend Vinny is completely oblivious. This is when you get false conflict. There was a misunderstanding because Mary thought that Vinny threw the ball at her. Then she didn’t get an apology so she perceived a negative situation. Vinny, on the other hand, has no idea anyone even wants an apology.

So how do we help Mary to recognize which problems she can attempt to work out on her own and which ones require immediate mediation? And why is it so important for her to do this on her own? Children who can resolve conflicts on their own are more likely to be accepted by their peers thus, making social integrations of all kinds easier as they mature. We can’t simply tell them this. Instead we need to find ways to help her 1) understand and verbalize feelings (in herself and others), 2) develop cooperation skills (teamwork), and 3) communicate effectively (explaining feelings, listening, being assertive). All of these combined give her the tools she needs to solve many of her daily conflicts.

## Feelings

There are many ways to help children understand feelings. Of course none of these is a cookie cutter that will work well for every child so here are a few different tools you can use to help your children.

Share past experiences: Sit in a circle with a small group of children and talk about how you felt during a frustrating situation and how you responded to those feelings. Have the children

take turns doing the same. See if they can identify triggers: Who or what upset you? Where did it happen (is the environment part of a trigger)? How did you respond? Could there have been a better response? If so, please explain. The idea behind the exercise is that if children have opportunities to practice identifying past feelings they are more likely to be able to identify and properly respond to new feelings and situations.

**Role Play Dice:** Have children take turns rolling dice to act out a scenario. One di should have feelings, the other can vary depending on your class. For younger classes you could use animals, for older kids you could use specific emotional triggers: i.e. sharing toys, budging, or (if we use our example from above) gym accidents. For added fun and understanding have a second child act as the “problem causer” and help guide them through the problem. Be sure not to skip the odd combinations: i.e. Happy & Budging. We all respond to situations differently and it is important to understand that some may have the opposite reaction than they would to a specific situation.

**Show and tell:** This last activity comes from Marissa Rex from Hiawatha Elementary in Toledo, Ohio. *A Healthy Way to Show Feelings* is an instructional article on how to lead your class in this activity. The basic idea of this activity is the same as sharing past experiences but with a twist!

### **Cooperation/Teamwork**

Group work can be a dreadful thing for many children – it was for me. As a child I was awkward and shy with a low self-esteem. I didn’t actually *know* many of my classmates and didn’t know how to integrate myself into a new group. This made group work terrifying but taught me the importance of ice breakers.

You know those silly little games that we use at the beginning of meetings to get everybody motivated? Why don’t we use some of the same activates (tweaked when necessary) with children every time they get into their groups? This is necessary to reform bonds that may have been severed since the last group meeting (like Mary and Vinny).

Besides forming bonds children also need to understand the importance of teamwork. Often

times I see groups with one or two members (like me) who sit off to the side as if they have nothing to offer. In almost every situation this is not the case; the child may simply believe that someone else must think of their idea too. Whatever the reason, we need to help him understand that each person makes a difference.

My favorite activity to teach the importance of teamwork is the Spider Web. You start with a ball of string and a circle of kids. Hand the ball of string to one of the children instructing her to hold on to the end of the string while she throws the ball to a group-mate across the circle. Here is where it gets fun! Pick a topic question to answer before they throw the ball of string: i.e. everybody’s favorite color or ice cream. For older kids I enjoy creating a story where each kid adds a sentence before throwing the ball. Once the web is created, demonstrate what happens when one person lets go of their string, then two and so on. For better visual understanding place a light ball or balloon in the middle of the web before having the children let go of their strings. See how long it takes the ball to drop. If you were telling a story try to take out the pieces of the story that one person added. Would it be the same story?

Before you wind up all of the string cut a small piece (seven to eight inches) for each child and tell them to tie it onto their backpack to remind them that they are part of a big web. As an alternative you can do this as a unit (as long or short as you desire) and give them an envelope in which to store their string each time you complete a web. Once you have finished the unit each child will have enough string to weave a bracelet of their choosing.

### **Communication**

Communication is key in any situation in which we deal with others – especially conflict. Many children find it much easier to express their feelings than to listen to others’ feelings. If we consider the ‘Feelings’ section of this paper we see that each of these activities is also an exercise in listening and the roll playing activity can easily be used to practice being assertive.

I love the idea of the dice game for teaching assertiveness because you can end up with everyday situations like Mary and Vinny. In our scenario I would ask Mary, since she was not hurt,

what her other options were after the ball hit her. Through the role playing activity you can help Mary use the correct language to speak with Vinny. "Why'd you hit me?" is not an ideal way to start any conversation.

Guide the conversation by asking questions: What is a polite way of talking to Vinny? Should you ask him *why* he hit you or inform him *that* he hit you? What do you hope will happen from this conversation? Is an apology necessary and if so, how do you politely ask for one? How do you respond if Vinny does not feel an apology is necessary? What can you do to make sure this problem does not occur again?

Solving the Problem  
Here is where all of the other sections get wrapped into one. Mary has expressed and communicated her feelings. She has listened to Vinny and found out it was an accident and he was unaware of it. This is a good place to stop (Mary has spoken with Vinny and she knows he did not intentionally hit her with the ball. She could go back to her hockey game and all would be just fine) but we won't because my main purpose is to help children solve their problems, not just put a Band-Aid on them. If we left Mary at this point she (or someone else) will most likely have to repeat the scenario in a few minutes when another basketball makes its way into the hockey game.

Our desired solution is to have Mary use her assertiveness and teamwork skills to shift the boundaries for each game. To do so we need to help her observe the big problem: the kids playing basketball are too close to the boundary of the hockey game. Ask her questions regarding her surroundings: Where are the hockey boundaries? Can the game be moved over? Are there other basketball hoops that can be used? Next, ask her what constructive action she can take or give her

options: Should you tell the kids playing basketball that they are in your way or ask them to move? Should you call time out for the hockey game so everyone knows the new boundaries?

### Summary

This paper is intended to assist teachers and child care providers in guiding children through conflict. Teaching children to understand their emotions and communicate them effectively gives them the tools they need to build successful relationships. When this occurs they will have more confidence to assert themselves appropriately. Eventually, with enough guidance and practice the "Mary's" and "Vinny's" of the world (amongst others) will be able to identify the causes of small conflicts and resolve them on their own.

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# How Timed Reading Improves Students in the Classroom

Taylor Hamersly

**Abstract:** This paper is about how timed reading in a classroom setting can help students develop a fluidity in reading, talking, and thinking. Timed reading is a comprehensive tool used by many teachers in their elementary classroom. It has been proven in tests to improve and increase fluency in students, the reading rates of students, and their comprehension of the material. Timed readings can help improve the characteristics of readings for an individual of any age. It is used in many elementary schools, but is proven to help and increase the reading rates of adults. This paper will describe what timed reading is, how it helps in classrooms around the globe, and the steps that it takes to achieve the timed reading process.

**Keywords:** *Timed reading, fluency, comprehension, reading rate*

There are many ways that timed reading activities can improve the reading skill of students. There have been tests proving that timed reading can help students gain a fluency when reading, increase their reading rate, improve their comprehension of the material, and gain a better understanding of different writing styles. With timed reading in schools, students have the chance to obtain these skills and be able to use them throughout their life.

## What is Timed Reading?

Timed reading is a comprehensive tool that enables students to increase and improve reading rate and reading accuracy, which are both aspects of fluency. Reading rate is the speed (measured in words per minute) one reads at. Reading accuracy is known as how correctly one pronounces and reads words from a text. Timed reading also improves one's ability to comprehend reading material. This gives individuals the ability to understand what they are reading and put it into one coherent idea.

## How Fluency is Affected by Timed Reading

Fluency is one skill that can be strengthened through timed reading. Anna Chang, a Professor in the Applied English Department at Hsing-Wu College in Taiwan, characterizes fluency as "the ability to read text rapidly, smoothly, effortlessly, and automatically with little attention to the

mechanics of reading such as decoding" (Chang 2010). Fluency is an important concept for children to have because it provides students with a skill that they can use their whole lives. I personally am a slow reader and become distracted very easily while reading various passages. I wish I had obtained fluency at a young age so that it would be easier for me to read these passages I struggle with. Having reading fluency would make it much easier to read passages at a higher rate with very little effort, which I believe is a skill that every person could use on a daily basis in everyday life.

According to Griffith and Rasinski (2004), fluency affects the comprehension of the material that a student is reading and their reading efficiency, which is important to have while reading in a classroom setting. A timed reading experiment was done on a classroom of students and they found that the children's fluency had increased and that the students had started to develop an expression within their readings (Griffith & Rasinski, 2004). The timed reading exercise has provided children in this particular study a skill that is valuable in schools today. Kids are being asked to read multiple chapters of novels in one night. With high fluency, obtained from timed reading, it would become effortless for the students to read several chapters for the next day. Not only will the students be reading faster, but they also will be able to understand and comprehend the material as they read it so they grasp a better idea of the meaning of the work itself.

## Effects of Timed Reading on Reading Rate

Timed readings can also help improve the reading rate of many types of students. In order to calculate the reading rate of students, a book is chosen that is at their current reading level, and they are tested on how many words can they read correctly in a one minute time frame (Hudson, Lane, & Pullen, 2005). In most cases, the students are recorded on a chart once each day. The record will show the amount of correctly read words vs. the amount of incorrectly read ones. This test will continue once every day until the student has reached zero incorrect words read and can read every word in the passage correctly within one minute. After the passage is complete, the student will move on to a different book that suits their reading level (Hudson et al., 2005).

Chang conducted a study to see how timed readings affect the reading rate of 84 college students. The students were split into two groups, one control group, and a group that would engage in timed readings. The two groups' reading rates were calculated and named "Time 1." After being tested, the experimental group engaged in timed reading sessions. The students' reading rates were then again tested and named "Time 2." These results show that the control group had a slight increase of 5% and the experimental group increased by an impeccable 25% in their reading rates (Chang, 2010). This shows that no matter the age, timed reading can help improve the speed that individuals read different passages at.

Another test by Chang was done on 35 adults that are considered foreign to the English language. The students were split into two different groups, a group for timed reading strategies and a group for repeated reading strategies. They also took a test prior to the reading intervention and a post-test, after a reading intervention. The reading rates of participants in the timed reading group increased by 50 words per minute or 49% in their case, while a repeated reading group's rate only improved by 27% (Chang, 2012). This shows that even if English is not the student's first language, the reading rate can be improved through timed reading tests. This also shows that timed reading is more of a trustworthy technique than repeated reading when a higher reading rate is the desired result.

### Personal Experience

Not only does timed reading have a positive effect on children that participate, but it can also help increase the reading rate and accuracy of adults. In both Chang studies, it is shown that the college students in the experimental group and adults with English as a foreign language can also show an increase in reading rates. This is very helpful because although it is important to teach the youth the tool of timed reading, it is also very helpful to know that even adults can improve. As I said before, I have difficulty reading rapidly and comprehending the passages I read. Through tests of timed reading that I have personally taken, I have noticed a drastic change in my reading style. The first step I took was to select a book at my reading level. I next created a daily chart to record my reading accuracy on. After doing this, I set a timer to one minute and began reading. Every time I stumbled or read a word incorrectly I wrote a dash on a piece of paper. Once

the minute was up, I totaled up the tallies I made on the paper and marked that number with an x. I did this once everyday with the same reading until I totaled zero misread words. I have noticed while reading different passages that I have a better understanding of the material I am reading and am able to read at a much faster pace than normal. Timed reading is a fantastic tool to use when one wants to increase their fluency, improve on reading accuracy, and increasing reading rate.

### Conclusion

Timed reading is a very beneficial tool to use both in and out of a classroom setting. It has been proven to increase the fluency and reading rate of students in elementary schools and in adults. Elementary students that were involved in the timed reading exercise showed an increase in fluency which also lead them to use expression in their reading (Griffith & Rasinski, 2004). Chang also proved that not only are elementary students affected by timed reading, but that adults can improve in their fluency and reading rate as well.

Studies show that timed reading has a positive effect on students' reading fluency. This is a very handy tool to use in elementary school classrooms. As a future teacher, I value this tool because I believe it could help many future students develop a reading fluency which is a skill they can use throughout their lives. Being able to read effortlessly and to comprehend the material that one is reading is something every person should have and value.

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# Academic Gaming in the Classroom

David Kadoun

**Abstract:** Academically oriented games and activities have been gaining a lot of notoriety in recent years as a pleasant and fun filled alternative to standard lecture and teaching practices. While lectures will retain their status in the classroom as an astoundingly functional method of teaching students information, informal teaching methods such as academic games and cross word puzzles have shown to have much in terms of social and academic benefits. By analyzing article and journal entries interested in the educational benefits and hurdles of interactive social games such as Jeopardy, Concentration, and Quiz bowls on active learning; with primary concerns being focused on retention of academic information and general satisfaction of lessons revolving these sorts of games. Through this paper we wish to present an argument that reaffirms the merits of informal games used as instructional techniques, especially that of "Jeopardy" which is the primary focus of our sources, and enlighten readers on what the aforementioned benefits are, and how to avoid issues arising from these practices application in the class.

**Keywords:** *Teaching Practices, Games, Learning Methods, Jeopardy, Active Learning*

## Academic Gaming in the Classroom

In an academic environment Active Learning Games are often used as a method of changing up the standard lecture orientated curriculum that can, at times, become rather monotonous. Student's more than ever are demanding of a learning experience that is more active and immediate, and one that is academically stimulating while still retaining a certain level of entertainment value (Ritzko & Robinson, 2006).

Academic games can have the potential to provide this experience when used to augment the standard teaching curriculum. Primarily used in test preparation, Jeopardy is one such game that has become rather popular when used as a studying augment due to its allowance of students to cooperatively and competitively review

previous material. But, what are the benefits that these games can provide? How much do they effect retention and classroom satisfaction for the students participating them? What are the potential difficulties of these games use for teachers (Afari et al., 2012, Webb et al., 2012)? It is the purpose of the paper to attempt to explain both the positives and potential negatives of "Jeopardy" style teaching practices, and in this attempt hope to show the extreme benefits that they can provide to students when appropriately used; and hopefully allow students to have a lot of fun in the process.

Before continuing to discussing the academic benefits to be had with through the use of active learning games (such as Jeopardy), it seems prudent to first discuss the negatives that can potentially arise from the induction of these procedures into a teachers curriculum. Both Rotter (2004), and Webb et al. (2012) invest considerable effort to discuss the potential issues that arise from the implementation of these games for students. For simplicities sake these issues are going to be split into two different categories, functional and social, and will be discussed in that order.

To begin functional issues are exactly what they sound like, issues with the actual application of the game into a teacher's curriculum for whatever reason. Be it budgetary, time constraints, or simply class size interfering with activity's desired result, functional issues can most assuredly represent a consistent (and numerous) struggle for any teacher to work around.

For many teachers simply finding the time to plan for, and implement, these non-traditional teaching strategies can be profoundly difficult, and can potentially lead to the avoidance of such methods (Ritzko & Robinson, 2006). Deterred, educators may fall back upon the standards of pencil and paper worksheets which can lead to a perceived, or actual, inflexibility of their academic curriculum (McDonald & Hannafin, 2003 as cited in Afari et al., 2012). There are many of these little problems that an educator has to face in order to best provide the active gaming learning

experience that their students deserve, and while it may seem a daunting task these sort of obstacles must be overcome if a teacher wishes to provide a diverse, engaging learning experience for their students; and with the constant progression of technologies the experience is becoming easier to provide.

Social issues of "Jeopardy" (and similar activities) primarily are centered on the principles of participant engagement, and the assurance that the lessons being taught through these methods is being equally beneficial to all students involved. Any curriculum created must be tailored to the members of the class it is meant to be provided to for maximum effect, and that rule is no different for interactive games. Poorly planned or maintained games can unbalance the learning experience due to both the social nature of the game and the increased noise level, which consequently can severely diminish the lesson being presented (Ritzko & Robinson, 2006). These type of detrimental effects can affect the individual as much as it can the class as a whole, and requires intimate teacher regulation of the game to prevent distraction or confusion. On top of all this, most educational games, especially Jeopardy, are competitive in nature. While this can certainly be an incentive for some participants, and get them even more involved in a friendly game, there is also the ever present concern that the competitive atmosphere created will have the opposite effect on other students.

The pressure to win, or the fear of losing, can be extremely destructive to the learning experience of some students (especially those that are perhaps deterred by competition), which of course defeats the purpose of the fun, low tension learning activity that was implied by the game (Webb et al., 2012). Rotter (2004) takes this inadvertent exclusion of student's one step further by addressing potential effects on children with learning disorders. While admittedly the student's discussed in this article are statistically younger than those addressed in the others its' message is rather omni-important, and should certainly be heeded. Any learning activity taught in school must be beneficial to all students taking part in it.

If a student is obtaining less of a benefit from the activity (or none at all), whatever that reason

may be, it is the responsibility of their teacher to intervene and change the activity so as to better provide for that student. Luckily, the beauty of Game's is that their flexible, and can be easily changed if need be to include every participant, but the constant attentiveness of the teacher is required for this change to happen.

In contrast, one of the major benefits to games such as Jeopardy is that they can provide a greater level of engagement and satisfaction for students, which is of great importance to educators. Positive satisfaction of materials can promote further involvement by students in academics, and those students who have a positive experience with a certain topic are potentially more likely to continue pursuit of that topic in the future (Afari et al., 2012). To discern this and other factors, a study performed by Afari et al. focused on the impact of gaming on both student satisfaction, and retention of information; the latter of which will be discussed later in this paper. 352 students were gathered from 33 United Arab Emirates college classrooms, and a pre-post mathematics test design was invoked with both English and Arabic translations.

A jeopardy style game was used on 90 of these participants, and the remainder were provided with a standard lecture presentation to measure the differences in the results of both teaching methods. According to Afari et al. student's who participate in games statistically perceived more teacher support, involvement, and general enjoyment of curriculum presented, resulting in increased satisfaction. Another, yet similar, study performed by Webb et al. (2012) concerning eight PGY2 General Surgery Residents, resulted in similar results. While this study had significantly less participants, students in this study still reported higher learner satisfaction, and an improvement when working with their peers. Overall, for both studies, the results seem positive to the use of Jeopardy as a studying aid in classrooms, and thusly support the idea that provided care is taken upon implementation of a game it can be an extremely positive influence on student motivation and moral.

"Rather than passive regurgitation of concepts, games allow students to engage in an interesting deviation from the classroom norm" (Grabowski and Price, 2003... as cited in Afari et

al., 2012)(133). In both of the studies referenced before (Afari et al.; Webb et al., 2012) the primary study of interest was not only that of student satisfaction, but also the comparison of how much information is retained from the Jeopardy activity in comparison to the amount retained from a standard academic lecture. This paper has already briefly touched on the effects on student involvement that games can provide, especially as a studying activity, but when combined with some sort of personal incentive (a miniscule amount of extra-credit can suffice) the competitive nature can provide striking results motivation; and consequently retention. The subsequent environment created, provided it is properly managed to include all participants, can improve student attitudes, and decreases stress for any upcoming test (the reason you would use such a Jeopardy system). In the pre-test post-test study performed by Webb et al., and its' eight PGY2 Surgery Residents, a marked improvement in delayed-posttest medical information retention with an average score of 82.6%. In comparison to those who did not participate in the jeopardy game whose average score was 74.5%, even assuming that there are some outlying factors that assisted those who participated in Jeopardy after the conclusion of the test, the difference in results is impressive; and assuredly deserves further study. While admittedly studies of this nature are still rather new, it does seem that alternative forms of interactive curriculum (such as games) has some serious merit towards academic retention, and should be highly considered for use.

In conclusion, while there is room for improvement on the studies used, and further

studies in the future, the merits of Games such as Jeopardy should at least be a little clearer now. Stressing the importance of learning environments are social and active is important, finding alternative and engaging ways of presenting information is important, and getting students involved activities (whether they be games, debates, group discussions, or other activities) is most assuredly important in a world of ever growing technology and standards. While the method of use is always important to consider, and the recourses needed to perform interactive activities is always a concern, if performed properly games (especially Jeopardy) can and will have a positive influence on Academics; and above all they're darn fun!

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# Guest Speakers: A Great Way to Commit to Education

Kevin Leor

**Abstract:** Having guest speakers in a classroom might seem like a bad idea for some, but very beneficial for others, in any event it is a very useful tool that is sometimes neglected and is often times left aside. This article presents an overview of its highs and lows, and what can be done in order to improve a student's learning in a more interactive, one-on-one, topic specific basis. Some examples and tips are mentioned in order to understand how this technique works and how it can be properly applied. This tool can be very helpful not only to the students, but it can also contribute to the teacher's knowledge and practices. This article analyzes the best ways this technique can be used in order to make classes more approachable and appealing for students.

**Keywords:** *Guest Speaker, Class Improvement, Teaching Approach, Student Involvement*

## Introduction

A Guest Speaker can be a great tool for the improvement of a class, because it offers a new perspective and variety in the way it is taught, while it provides important specific subjects that are often omitted from a regular class. That in turn brings a better learning experience to the students, the teacher and even the guest speaker. Because of the way this technique is used, a better one-on-one approach is achieved, as well as a better understanding of a topic that otherwise would be very dull or unclear. Students have a chance to learn about said specific topic in a way that helps them get fully involved in the class and actively engage in a more approachable way of teaching.

A student tends to be more interested in participating in class when there is a topic he or she would like to know more about. In the case there is a determined subject a teacher is not so proficient in, a guest speaker is then brought in to talk about their said field of expertise. Guest speakers also impact staff as well as students, in the most beneficial way possible, they improve their knowledge.

As mentioned in "An update of marketing student perceptions of learning activities:

Structure, preferences, and effectiveness" (Karns, 2005). A study made on college students shows that every student is different and that they have different ways of learning, there are many categories on what a student can be divided into. For instance, there are some students that are considered "sensate" who prefer real-world learning and respond well to lectures, but do poorly when it comes to activities that involve vagueness. "Visual" students are also included on this list, they prefer pictures, videos, diagrams, among others and work well in group projects, but do not respond well to guest speakers. Moving on with the list, there are also "sequential learners" that prefer logic but do not do very well with lecturers either. And lastly, there are "active learners" who prefer discussion. Each one of these categories help in the understanding of how a student's mind set works and what are the best ways to approach those mind sets in order to assist their learning, without jeopardizing their motivation, their skills or their confidence.

According to these categories, it can be seen that there is a split right in the middle between students that respond well to guest speakers and students who do not. The way this learning activity is used has a huge impact on the students' interest for the class. There is never going to be a right answer or a right way on how to apply this rarely used technique, but certain measures can be taken in order for a guest speaker event to have the expected results for a determined classroom.

## Results

One of the questions that may arise is, "why is this method barely used in classrooms, if it is as successful as the studies have shown?"

First off, there is an issue that every teacher faces, time constraint, this limitation often times impedes a class from covering the materials stipulated for the course, in most occasions teachers tend to leave out the possibility to have someone come and help with lectures, because they need to follow a "set schedule" that tells them what to cover within the few months of duration of the class. Secondly, it might be difficult to find

guest speakers that can travel to where the class is taking place or finding a time that matches their schedule and the time needed. Thirdly, it can also be expensive. If it so happens that the guest speaker does not live anywhere nearby the school district where he or she is needed, travel expenses and accommodations must be taken care of. And last but not least, there might be a shortage in technology in a given classroom, making it more difficult to invite a speaker, in the case they need to use specific equipment for their presentations. These are some reasons why this learning technique is rarely used. However, it does not mean that they are the main or most accurate causes, but they are often times the most common impediments for this activity to happen.

The outcome of this practice not only depends on the ability of the speaker to make it successful, it also depend on the willingness, motivation and interest that the student presents when it comes to this matter. The reason for this is that sometimes a teaching practice is not successful and modifications to it need to be done in order to make it work, but none of this would work if there isn't a shared interest in learning/teaching from both parties. One of the disadvantages is that due to different student profiles it is very hard to be successful at it, but when successful, it can create a "bond" between the speaker and the student, because then the interest for the subject is awakened. As talked about in "Pitching the profession: Faculty guest speakers in the classroom" (Mooney, 1998). A well done guest speaker lecture can bring the student into the further liking of the field talked about, and can lead to a full enrollment into it, as well as secondary "consequences" such as field-related connections, a different point of view on ideas previously taught in a different way, and above all, better learning.

One of the disadvantages of this activity is that it is not always successful and it can certainly influence the way a student performs in class. Also, another drawback might be that it takes time out of the class to include these practices in it, and some other important topics might be set aside. The best way to prevent this is to plan ahead and have a determined schedule for the class and if

necessary cut out the subjects that have little to no relevance, to talk about specific material. In addition to that, guest speakers might not be always available or near the place where they are needed, and this might cause the class to not even use this resource at all. But if possible, a video conference or an online addition to the class might be required to solve this problem.

An online option and a great way to have a guest speaker involved in the class is mentioned in "Evaluating the impact of guest speaker postings in online discussions" (Hemphill, L. S., & Hemphill, H. H., 2007). In this article, a guest speaker for an online class turns out to be a rather successful event, in which students get 100% involved into the class, and as described, the peak in activity from them comes when the guest speaker is implicated in the class. They tend to show a greater rate of "productivity" by participating in all kinds of discussions, postings, etc. It is more successful than in an actual classroom by certain factors, one of them might be perhaps psychological. In which the student in a classroom seems to be more introverted at the time of asking/answering questions, whereas in an online course there is nothing to be afraid of, and if the topic that is being spoken of interests the student, participation is more likely to happen when using this method.

Another example of positive results from guest speakers in classrooms is stated in "Guest speakers: reflections on the role of accountants in the classroom" (Metrejean, C., Pittman, J., & Zarezki, M.T., 2002). In this article it is explained how making guest speakers mandatory is a very successful option, because it shows that the results are even better than expected; it also provided connections within the accounting major undergraduates and the speakers, who were subjects in this study.

If applied into elementary education, it will create an even more successful result, because the students will soon develop a desire to learn about specific topics, a better bond with the faculty staff, among other benefits. The school will also be seen as one that cares a lot about its students' education and that reputation will pay off with time, as students graduate in a more prepared manner.

## Conclusion

In a less positive description, as mentioned before, using this modality might be contra productive, since it can be more expensive to use, or the school may not have the technology needed for it, but on the greater scheme of things, this idea seems very feasible in a today's classroom, where technology is key. The only drawback to this idea is that there really is no genuine interaction between the speaker and the student. Unless a video conference is opted, then the way this idea is presented seems more close to the real-world teaching, rather than just reading postings online from an unknown person.

In the articles reviewed, there were mixed results on whether having a guest speaker is a good idea or not, but they all mentioned that it depends on the kind of students that are being taught and how willing they are to engage into their own learning. A guest speaker in a classroom in my point of view, is a great tool that needs to be used more often, because it provides specific knowledge, personal-level comprehension, and it motivates students to actively participate in the classroom with a different person who can answer

their specific questions. In my personal experience I have been a guest speaker in several classes and it has been as helpful to me as it has helped the students and even the professor in understanding topics on which I was the only one with first-hand experience on the subject. Therefore, I highly recommend and support this activity in classrooms and conferences.

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# Mnemonic Devices: The Solution to Memory Failure

Erin Blackford

**Abstract:** This paper is an explanation of how to solve the issue of memory failure and forgetfulness in students through the use of mnemonic devices. This paper will explain to a reader how using mnemonic devices can help students better remember hard facts and long lists of information, as well as better focus students and help them pay attention in class. Mnemonic devices have been around for quite awhile, and yet some teachers fail to utilize them as a helpful tool to better their students and fortify their classroom. Mnemonic devices have been proven to work by countless experiments, and this paper will explain the benefits of mnemonics and the many different ways a teacher can implement them into their teaching styles.

**Keywords:** *mnemonic device, memory, focus, acronym, rhyme, buzzword*

An obvious problem many teachers face is their students not remembering all of the information they have been taught. It is hard to enough to cover everything on the curriculum in one year, let alone make sure students remember everything they need to know for a test or assignment. Another problem teachers face is a student being unable to stay focused or pay attention. Students these days have so many distractions available right at their fingertips. From new technology, to lack of sleep, to personal issues, a student can have their mind preoccupied on anything and everything besides the subject at hand.

A wonderful solution to these problems is to use a simple mnemonic device. A mnemonic device is a technique someone can use to help them improve their ability to remember, and to better focus the brain so it is able to recall information at a later point in time. Mnemonic devices have been around for quite some time, yet many teachers do not take advantage of this device that has been proven to work in students. And this technique is not limited to a certain group of students either. This method of teaching has been proven to work on the typical student,

along with learning challenged or disabled students, as well as students who are speakers of foreign languages. The mnemonic device should become more popular as a good teaching practice, as it has been proven by countless research projects to be effective. The mnemonic device should be used as one of the best teaching practices a professor can use.

In order to best prove that mnemonic devices really do work, and work very effectively, the first order of business is finding research and studies completed that prove the power of the mnemonic device. A study, done by G. H. Bower in 1972, tested subjects by giving half of the participants a mnemonic device to better remember the list of nouns they were given to memorize. The other participants were given no device, and had to try to memorize the list with no assistance. The subjects were then asked exactly one day later to recite the list of nouns. Both subject groups were able to produce almost all of the words. However, when tested a week later, the half of the participants that used the mnemonic device were able to produce twice as many of the nouns compared to the half that did not receive the mnemonic device. When tested two weeks after the initial learning, the mnemonic group once again tested higher than the other group. This study is an excellent example of how mnemonics do work, and it is also an excellent example of why teachers should be using mnemonic devices. As a student, it is easy to simply remember something for a short time, pass a test and move on to the next subject. But that causes major problems for students later in life when they need to recall the information they learned earlier. A mnemonic device makes retrieving information from the brain easier. Teachers should be using them in order to better help students remember important information they will need for future tests. Instead of simply preparing students for the next test, teachers could be preparing students for every test to come.

There are many different examples of mnemonic devices. One of the most popular types is a rhyme used to help the learner remember a

fact. For example, "In fourteen hundred ninety-two, Columbus sailed the ocean blue". This little rhyme can help a student remember the exact year Christopher Columbus discovered the Americas. Another example could be "Six and eight went on a date, and had to be back by four past eight." This one helps a student remember a tricky multiplication problem. Rhyming mnemonics are very helpful to young children, as rhyming gives them double the opportunity to remember. By remembering one word, it is likely the child will be able to find the matching word to finish the rhyme. A very useful rhyme history students can use to remember what happened to all of Henry the 8th's wives is: divorced, beheaded, died, divorced, beheaded, and survived. This simple little rhyme can help students remember a complex order of events that most struggle to remember. By using the mnemonic device of rhymes, teachers give their students a better chance of remembering important information.

Another popular type of mnemonic device is the acronym. An acronym is when the first letter of each word in a string of words spells out another word. For example, by using the acronym Roy G. Biv, a student can remember all of the colors of the rainbow in the order they appear in: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet. One of the most popular acronyms used by students in science classes is King Henry Died By Drinking Chocolate Milk. This acronym helps students to remember the different prefixes used in the metric system. As children in the United States don't use the metric system until later in life, this mnemonic device can save a student a lot of trouble by making it very simple to remember all of the different measurements. Acronyms can even be used in foreign language classrooms. A Spanish teacher can help their students remember the irregular forms of command verbs by giving them the acronym "Vin Diesel Has Ten Weapons". This mnemonic device, when said with a Spanish accent, spells out every single irregular command verb a Spanish student could need to know: Ven Di Sal Haz Ten Ve Pon Se. This acronym can save students a lot of headaches when trying to learn a foreign language. Acronyms are a fantastic way to remember lists of information.

A mnemonic device does not only come in the form of a rhyme or acronym though. A mnemonic

device can be more than a phrase used to remember specific information. Mnemonics can also be used to better store and recall information, along with better focusing students. In a study done by F. Bellezza in 1982, a group of people were told a "buzzword" or a word to associate with learning. For example, while learning and following along with a lecture, participants would hear a specific word right before a piece of very important information was shared. A teacher could utter the word "Damn!" right before or after a vital piece of extremely important information. This is a cue to the students that they better remember what was just spoken. The mild swear word would certainly catch the attention of students, and would guarantee their attention. Later on while taking a test, students would be able to recall information better by remembering what was said before or after the "Damn!" The students would associate the buzzword with the information in their brains, thus making recall easier.

Mnemonic devices are not only superb for the average student, but they also work fantastically for students with learning disabilities and for students that need a little extra help learning. According to an article by S. Graham and K. Harris, a mnemonic device is an effective teaching strategy for teaching students with learning disabilities. It helps the students by making information easier to organize. It also helps disadvantaged students as a mnemonic device is often repeated, and the repetitive action of saying a word or phrase over and over can be very helpful to really drill the information into a student. By employing the use of mnemonic devices, teachers will be better able to reach out to all of their students. This will better ensure that students can be on a more even playing field, and it will help give every student a chance to learn and remember important information.

Many students in today's schools struggle with the process of memorization and recall. An even bigger number of students deal with an increasing amount of distractions that can slow down or inhibit their learning. By using mnemonic devices, teachers would be able to reach a wider variety of students, and would be able to help different student through the same method.

Mnemonics are a fantastic way to help students remember difficult facts and information by teaching through rhymes, acronyms and buzzwords. If more teachers used mnemonic devices, students would be better prepared for tests. Being better prepared for tests creates more confident and education-hungry children. Implementing a mnemonic into the classroom should become every teacher's goal.

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# Homework Teaching Strategies

Ashley Pagel

**Abstract:** To ensure the best for students, teachers have been trying to figure out the most creative ways to present material so that their students will be able to learn what is asked of them in the most effective way. While different practices are recommended like the use of electronics, field trips, hands on learning, and many more; this paper describes why the best practice of all is homework. The reasons behind this are because of the homework's intended purpose and positive effects that occur because of it.

**Keywords:** *homework, purpose, positives*

While teaching, instructors have used many practices to help their students in learning their core subjects such as math, science, history, and English. Some current in-class tactics include the use of electronics, hands-on learning, student participation, active participation, oral reading, and many more. Although all of these strategies are very common and useful, one practice has the most positive outcomes that are academically, short-term, long-term, and non-academically relevant to the students. Being used for many decades, homework has taken on different meanings and connotations towards students.

Originally, homework was used to discipline students' minds, then the attitudes towards homework started to change or shift into a different direction. Around the mid-1960's homework was seen by the teachers and parents as too much pressure to put onto student's minds. Moving on to the mid-80's, many studies were done and conducted to figure out the usefulness of homework and it was then seen as a positive influence for students (Cooper, H., 2006). With numerous studies being done to figure out the benefits of homework, many different factors affect the outcome. For example; what is the purpose of homework and how much homework is the right amount to be given to different grade levels?

Everything has a place and purpose. Teachers do not give tests or quizzes to students because they want to see them suffer and struggle. This

same principle applies to homework. A teacher does not thrive on the power given to them by seeing their students struggling to accomplish their homework. Homework should be a positive experience for students. Disciplining children by giving them homework is not the way of teaching a student the different subjects they are supposed to learn in school. The true purpose of homework should be to help the student practice, participate, help in personal development, increase the parent-child relationship, and public relations (Epstein, J.L., 1988). While students practicing homework to become better in a specific subject is a clear idea, some of the other reasons that homework helps a child are a bit unclear.

Participation from a child can be hard to draw out. Sometimes it depends on the student. It can differ from if the student is naturally shy, does not know the material, or they may feel that their answer is wrong and they will be looked down upon or laughed at by their fellow peers. Every class also has the students that "carry the others" in the class and that can be quite intimidating to other students. These students are the ones to answer every question asked by the teacher and there are only a handful of these kids in every classroom. With these kids, they sometimes steal the spotlight, the teacher's attention, and could make the other students feel like they shouldn't be answering the questions by making them feel inadequate. By giving homework through the form of worksheets or readings that have questions included that students are required to answer, participation by other students who don't usually answer questions should increase gradually.

Students start to gain confidence in their work because they start to come out of their shell and realize that it is ok to have a wrong answer. Wrong answers said by students are actually positive in nature as well. Although right answers are strongly encouraged, wrong answers can help teachers realize what a student needs help on. Homework also requires students to practice what they learned and in return, when a teacher asks questions about the homework they just

completed, that child can feel confident that they can give a decent answer when called upon. Eventually there will be no students “carrying the class”, but the whole group working together to answer and solve problems or questions asked by the teacher. Homework also helps is with the parent-child relationship. While homework sometimes can be completed during class, some or most of it has to be taken home. At home, children start to forget what they did in class and because the teacher can’t help their students when the student is at home, the job falls upon the parents to help them. With the help of the parents, children can start to bond and form a closer relationship with them while doing their homework.

Homework is a positive influence, starting with the purpose of it and ending with how much it really affects the student. While we know some of the more obvious ways that homework is able to impact a student positively, some studies have to be done to figure out the deeper effectiveness that homework can have on students.

While many people have done studies on the effects of homework, one man’s studies have paved the way for others, Harris Cooper. In his studies, Cooper used different situations to figure out if homework was a positive influence. He deduced that homework had multiple positive effects academically and non-academically. Cooper also not only saw a short-term positive effect, but a long-term effect as well. The immediate achievement and learning paved the way for students to gain better retention skills of factual knowledge, an increased understanding of the subjects, greater critical thinking, the processing of information, and a keener concept formation. The long-term positive effects Cooper found that homework had on students, were a willingness to learn during the time that they had away from school, an improved attitude towards school, and better study habits and skills. Gaining this knowledge, Cooper also saw a positive effect in terms of non-academics towards students. A student who did homework had a greater self-direction and self-discipline, better time organization, and more independent time solving (Cooper, H., 1989).

Homework is also positive in the dealings of the school. Homework is cost effective, links the school and family, and contains different purposes with each grade that help the school determine if the students are achieving the knowledge that they need to know before they continue onto the next grade (Cooper, H.,1994). With all the positive effects coming from the studies Harris Cooper has done, another question arises. How much homework is too much for it to start becoming a negative effect on students and their learning?

Homework has a different effect on each grade level and how old a student is. Younger students should have homework that creates a positive attitude, instills good habits, and great character traits; whereas, older students should have homework that helps them learn the material and the specific topics that the teacher has taught them.

Older students should be able to take the harder homework that they had on what they learned in class and be able to apply it to different situations. Through Cooper’s studies, he has determined that from grades one to three, students should have one to three assignments a week that last 15 minutes or less. Grades four to six should have two to four assignments a week that last 15-45 minutes a week. From grades seven to nine, homework should last 45-75 minutes a week with only three to five assignments and grades 10-12 should have four to five assignments lasting 75-120 minutes long (Cooper, H., 1994). Concluding on his studies, each grade level has shown that these designated amounts of mandatory homework and times are optimal for each grade. This shows that the amount of homework being presented should help these students gain the short-term, long-term, academic, and non-academic positive effects. Any more than recommended and students may become resentful towards the homework and a negative effect will start to occur.

Teachers have had different activities to help their students retain the information that they have been conducting in their classrooms. While some tactics may not have as many positive effects, other types of strategies do. From electronics to student activities, each one has

many outcomes that positively and negatively affect the students. Although one very old practice is still the best of them all. It may seem like a chore to students, but there is a reason why homework is called what it is. To learn the material in the most optimal way, students should have to take their tasks home and work on it. That homework that students take home could include a paper that the teacher assigns, a project/PowerPoint on a specific topic, worksheets, readings and problems from the book, and many more. Homework is the best teaching strategy because it ensures that the students can retain the information that they practice and it helps them gain the positive qualities that are associated with it.

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**Ashley Pagel** is originally from Chilton, Wisconsin and is currently a freshman at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls. She is majoring in Elementary Education and minoring in General Science. Ashley's favorite part of teaching is knowing that the students may benefit from the knowledge that she gives them, start to enjoy school, and that they have fun in the process.

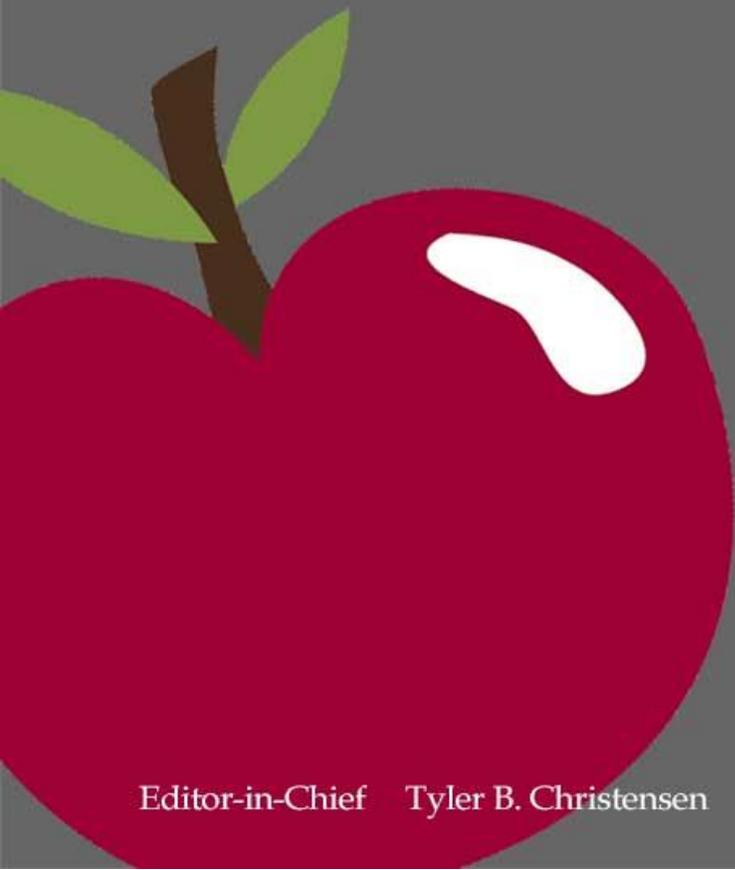
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