

Teacher to Teacher

A DoDEA Teachers of the Year Publication

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Beyond the Textbook

by Patricia Laney
2007 DoDEA
Teacher of the Year

As teachers we have the responsibility of educating children. I believe that responsibility goes beyond what is thought of as teaching; it is a great deal more. The goal to educate our children goes far beyond the textbooks and curriculum. I firmly believe that it is my responsibility to work with the whole child. I feel it is my duty to prepare my students not just academically, but to make sure they know how important they are and they are cared about. I want to instill in them the knowledge that they are competent, capable people who can learn. For me to achieve my goal I have to make my classroom and where it is located, as warm and welcoming as I possibly can.

All students need to feel they belong, to a class, to a school, to a community. School is a place they should feel not only safe but a place where people care about them, like a family. If we are going to achieve in teaching the standards and the curriculum, then we have to make sure our students want to be there. This may sound strange but I truly believe that a student who wants to be in class can learn just about anything, but a student who does not want to be there makes teaching and learning much harder. Building a sense of community in our schools is the first step.

Every teacher, administrator, support staff member must all be involved. The students need to know and feel that we care about them, from the smile they see on our faces in the hallway, to the time we take just to listen to what they want to share. This caring will just naturally spill over into the classroom and our expectations of students' success becomes so much easier to achieve.

Once the stage is set, we are ready to get started. Now we need to have students take responsibility for the actual learning. We have to work together and "together" is the only way we are going to be successful. They must take ownership of their education if it's going to be meaningful and life changing. I have to help them become risk takers with their learning and to be curious about the world around them. My job is to channel that curiosity and facilitate their learning. Now it is up to me to make sure I am presenting lessons that are engaging and tap into the different learning modalities, allowing the children the opportunity to showcase their strengths. At the same time, it is necessary to show them ways that they may increase their understanding of how they learn and ways to compensate in areas that are difficult for them. If I am able to get children to invest in their learning and think reflectively about it, then I have given them a skill for life-long learning. I have helped them take ownership of and responsibility for their learning.



Pat Laney with President and Mrs. George Bush at the White House

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Layout and Design by Mark Conner

"A good teacher is like a candle - it consumes
itself to light the way for others."
~ Author Unknown



The Joy of Teaching Children to Read

by Dori Lassey
South Carolina/Fort Stewart
District
2007 Teacher of the Year

After over 30 years of teaching young children, what I would like to share is the joy of teaching children to read. This joy shines in the faces of those children who are considered struggling readers when they achieve success. As an instructional support teacher, these are the children I teach. It is their faces that keep me motivated and allow me to continue to love what I do after all these years.

It has been my career goal to have a deep understanding of the reading process and how reading is affected by different variables. Over the years I have learned what I believe has made the most significant differences in my students' reading successes. I have used many methods and materials, some with better results than others. Regardless of what methods or materials I am using I am always certain to include ways that will build children's background knowledge, further develop their language development and help them understand that they **are** readers already by tapping into what they **do** know. A primary goal is to motivate children to read and maximize time spent reading books of the appropriate range of difficulty and interest. I also share with children and their parents the many joys of reading independently and together.

When children enter the walls of our school they come to us with a wide array of experiences and abilities. Just as no two homes are alike, neither are any two children. It is my responsibility, as an early childhood educator, to understand how experiences "beyond the school walls" will affect children's learning. Some will be closer to standard expectations than others. So I observe and assess each child and build upon the knowledge they have. I must also be aware that children will bring into the school setting different background knowledge, levels of language development, and a variety of attitudes and emotions. I must endeavor to know each child as a reader **and** as a person.

Self-esteem and motivation have an enormous impact on a child's openness to learning. Another goal is to help children view themselves as part of a caring community of learners, in which all members are valued. We begin our year by recognizing each child's knowledge and strengths and honoring the knowledge each child brings. We discuss how each student is an important part of our learning team. I refer to myself as their reading

coach and the children are the reading team: supporting each other, helping each other, and growing together, as we learn new strategies and put those strategies to use. This is accomplished as we are doing a wide range of reading. We start with big books as part of our shared reading experience. The best book choices are those with rhythm, rhyme and predictable repeating lines—especially if they are humorous. These books give all children, from kindergarten through second grade, a chance to be successful and enjoy reading right from the start. We also do side by side reading and independent reading of favorite books throughout the year.

Many of the attitudes about reading, issues of self-esteem and motivation develop through early literacy experiences in the home. To help parents understand how their children are learning to read, I have developed a parent/student book club. I offer light refreshments and we meet one evening and two afternoons a month for forty-five minutes. During the first fifteen minutes children are invited to share their favorite books from our classroom selections. Then I model multiple reading strategies as we read a big book in a small group lesson. I demonstrate and encourage discussion as we read. Next, I give parents the opportunity to do the same as I offer tips and encouragement on ways to keep reading engaging and upbeat. I have a large variety of books from which students and parents may choose to take home books for shared reading. The feedback I have received from parents has been positive and very encouraging. Many stated that they were often frustrated and not sure how to help their child until they had attended the book club.

Years of classroom experience, continuing education in literacy theory and DoDEA standards have guided me throughout the years. I have learned to use continuing assessment with my students and also to regularly assess myself as well. This is an ongoing process to measure growth and to plan for new learning. I have used my knowledge of each individual child, my knowledge base of the reading process, and continuing assessment to provide the best instruction to meet each child's needs. This is accomplished through using the same practices as the classroom teachers: read aloud, shared reading, guided reading and independent reading practice, and word work (phonemic awareness/phonics), as well as readers' theater and performance poetry to help improve fluency. We also expand writing skills through interactive writing and shared writing activities. Everything that I do with my students and every material I use supports standards-based instruction and student need. My joy of teaching reflects the joy of children experiencing success while learning to read and this has been my motivation and the best guidance throughout my career.





Setting the Stage for Learning

by Linda Anders
New York/Virginia/Puerto Rico/Cuba
District
2007 Teacher of the Year

Transforming the classroom into a welcoming, interesting, stimulating and exciting environment is one of the greatest gifts you can give your students. It is so important that this location is colorful, organized and child friendly for any age student. Of course this planning and implementing takes time, and even funds, but it is so worth it.

I believe my greatest accomplishment might be the physical and emotional environment that I create every school year for the children who enter my classroom. Setting that stage is most influential as you prepare for success and plan to engage the learner. The classroom must entice them to enter and be a fun place where they may experience a wide range of activities, take ownership, feel safe to express themselves, and work comfortably. Whether the room is decorated as a deep sea adventure or is covered in vines for the appearance of a rainforest, it is their second home and may even be the place where they can be happiest.

It is important for me to plan the room for visual stimulation according to a particular theme. Everywhere there are ways



to engage their imagination and natural curiosity. I always have many areas within the room for hands on learning, often allowing them to make choices for the activities. Here they will touch real fish and octopus and will experience the cold of icy Artic waters and the insulation of blubber. They will have the freedom to move about the room, to read in a whale pool or rest on a huge stuffed alligator beneath a large palm to share a favorite story. They will see their work and pictures around them and also look up to see their rendition of the latest animal from the themed habitat hanging above them.

This will be their place. When reading buddies, parents and adult visitors enter their room, they will proudly show them around. They will invite them to join their tables which are labeled with the names of oceans when the sea is the theme or with the layers of the rain forest. People who enter are amazed by it all, but, more importantly, by the wealth of knowledge the students have acquired merely by being there. A year long theme will continue to thrill and interest them. This is a place even I enjoy coming to. To all in the school it is not Room 14; it is the Anders' Amazon. Most importantly, they want to be there, so the rest, the learning, is easy!



"You are educated. Your certification is in your degree. You may think of it as the ticket to the good life. Let me ask you to think of an alternative. Think of it as your ticket to change the world."

Tom Brokaw

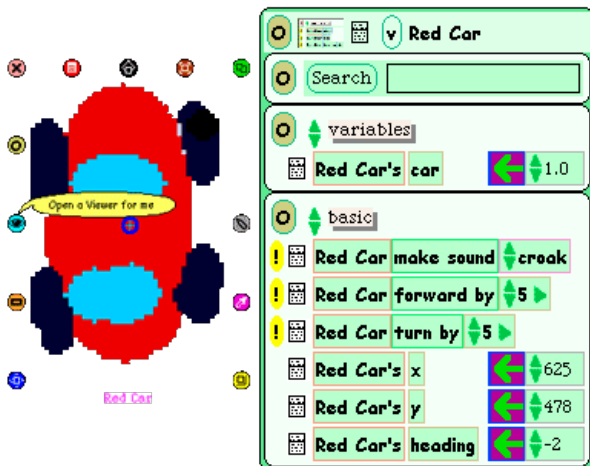


FREE SIP RESOURCES!

by Eric Eisaman
Guam District
2007 Teacher of the Year

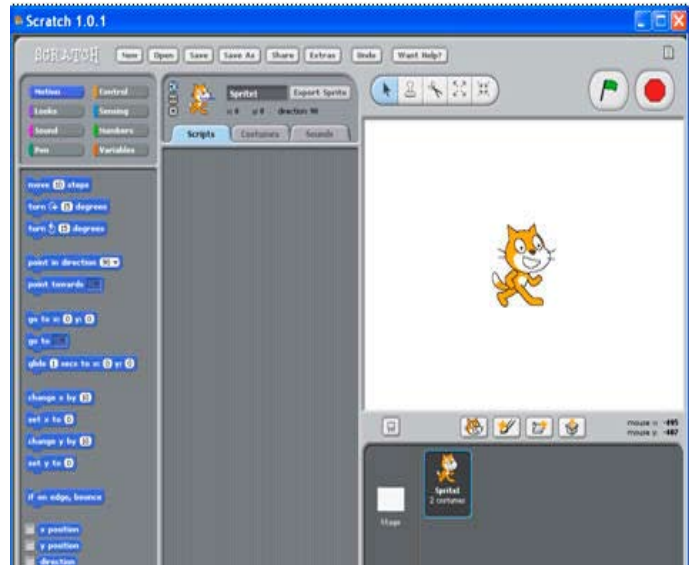
Squeak E-Toys, Scratch, and Sophie provide students, parents, and educators a free and creative means by which to improve reading, writing, and critical thinking skills. These software programs are all built on the powerful virtual machine of Squeak written in Smalltalk by the incredible Alan Kay, who some say invented the PC, the laptop, the bitmap, and windows (given to Apple Computer Inc.).

Squeak E-Toys is available at www.squeakland.org. Squeak E-Toys is an environment for creating graphics, simulations, animations, music, games, presentations and more. The web site provides many exemplars and tutorials. NASA CONNECT has great Squeak-based projects at their site <http://connect.larc.nasa.gov/squeak.html>.



These resources are for informational purposes only. DoDEA does not promote or endorse the software described.

Scratch is available at <http://scratch.mit.edu>. The web site describes the software saying, "Scratch is a new programming language that makes it easy to create your own interactive stories, animations, games, music, and art -- and share your creations on the web." Scratch is simpler to use than Squeak E-Toys yet lacks some of the advanced functionality.



Sophie is available at <http://sophieproject.org>. According to the site, "Sophie is a digital media assembly tool which allows you to combine images, text, video, and audio into a single multimedia document. It is an easy-to-use program that lets you put together documents, slideshows, presentations, annotated videos, and more." Sophie is also highly interactive.



Have fun creating and learning with these FREE RESOURCES!



Making it Relevant

by Jacqui Gustafarro
Kaiserslautern District
2007 Teacher of the Year

A few years ago, a colleague and I decided to tackle the problem of how to deal with all the concepts we are expected to present, while giving them some relevance. This came from a shared belief that integration was the most efficient way to maximize understanding. We went through standards and made organizers so we could see where connections could be made across curriculum areas. We left the project open and fluid, knowing there would be many changes as we worked throughout the year. We shared what we'd done with colleagues and encouraged them to take it in small steps.

As we searched through a myriad of materials seeking relevance to the students, we found that many trade books were stories about children who had performed courageous deeds. Keeping in mind that our DoDEA student population moves frequently to and from places all over the world, we decided that this would be our connecting thread. The integration would focus on how the children in our classes resembled the brave children in the stories. They, too, must leave favorite places and people they love, and adjust to unfamiliar food, customs and languages. Geography took an interesting twist when we decided to plot in which states and countries our students had lived. The map created a wonderful graphic of diversity, while promoting geographic awareness.

I use this as an example of how I came to see the importance of relevance in teaching children. The closer we can bring it to them and their personal experiences, the more involved they will become, and the more they will learn. The most valuable thing I learned from this experience, both with children and fellow teachers, was that keeping things relevant provides the necessary connections to making curriculum genuine and understandable.

When asked how I would like to see accountability carried out among educators I have to refer back to relevance and inter-connections. The more we teach people to look to what they do and to determine how it connects to things we know are worthy of being taught, the more efficient their teaching will become.

We have to utilize the expertise of colleagues who consistently make curriculum relevant.

The kinds of experiences that have been the most beneficial for my growth as an educator are those that allow me to work with my colleagues in an on-going basis. Professional respect forms when we look to our peers for assistance rather than turning to general formulas that may have no use in the context of our school setting. Professional growth plans and collaborative sessions among colleagues, where teams produce rubrics to self-assess and determine positive ways to build on what individual teachers do best, along with peer observations are strategies that, I believe, lead to real school improvement.

In order for any type of evaluation to be genuine there must be a common understanding concerning its purpose and projected outcomes. How do we make effective use of the expertise within our system? What are we assessing for? How do we support teachers who are struggling? These are questions that have to be addressed if we really wish to move along in the direction of greater competency.

I do believe that we are moving to a place where we meet for a common purpose, with a willingness to examine our strengths and weaknesses. Teachers, administrators and union representatives have one thing in common; and that's our concern for the improvement of education. We know that a certain amount of negative public view exists right now. And even though much of this perception may be incorrect, it is still something we have to change. We can only do this by putting aside old agendas and work collaboratively to give our courageous, dynamic American children the excellence they deserve. Our legacy is our children.



Teachers of the Year, DoDEA headquarters personnel and guests enjoy the after-dinner entertainment at the Teacher of the Year Recognition dinner



On the Teaching of Math Or: Things I Have Learned About Thinking After Spending Two Summers in Iowa

by Stefan Zappey
Bavaria District
2007 Teacher of the Year

I have decided that I don't teach Math in my classroom any more; at least not in ways which I would have considered a few years ago to be conventional and valid methods. Not that my kids don't **do** math – on the contrary! They are probably more engaged in math now than in any year before. They spend more time **doing math** -- and yet they do less math. There are periods – days and sometimes an entire week – when one problem will be all that we manage to accomplish. And sometimes, math looks and sounds more like a language arts or science lesson. Kids are arguing and persuading, listening and rebuking, attempting to formulate ideas for which they often have not yet developed the appropriate vocabulary, and, perhaps most importantly of all, they are often still! It is during those moments that they are thinking, pondering, engaging, and questioning. Eyebrows move closer together in contemplative thought, bodies wiggle restlessly as an uncomfortable idea is put forth, and kids wrestle with ideas, phenomena, and concepts that many had never encountered before. Math time is often an uncomfortable time – kids are pulled out of their comfort zone, it is not always predictable, and rarely does one lesson mirror another. What it is not is a time to complete page after page in our math book.

What's going on in math? And what in the world does Iowa have to do with it?

For the past two summers, and again this July, I have been fortunate to be selected for the DMI/UNI workshops dealing with the development of mathematical ideas (DMI), co-sponsored by the University of Northern Iowa and DoDEA. The workshops explore familiar topics in math – number systems, geometry, and numeration – but go far beyond the traditional teaching and transmitting of skills and strategies. As a matter of fact, the skills and strategies don't really show up in DMI workshops. Not that they are taboo, but one does come to understand that it is not skills and strategies that are being discussed and valued, but concepts – concepts and deep, genuine understanding. Borrowing heavily from, and incorporating throughout, Constance Kamii's constructivist theory, it is the **children** who do the math, and not (as is the case in more traditional programs) the **teacher** who does it for them. And that is the bottom line of DMI: math is a construct which each child builds for him/herself. It is a conceptual process that must be discovered and whose rules and regularities and patterns can then be explored so that learning

and understanding can take place. It is not a hand-out process, but a do-it-yourself endeavor in which the teacher finds his/her role as a guide, a mentor, and often a poser of questions. It is a rather Socratic process, one in which children's thinking is guided and developed through probing and thought-provoking questions. It is lively, time-consuming, often agonizing, sometimes frustrating, and at times a lesson ends with more questions than answers. And I'm hooked on it!

"Whatta you mean you can't subtract 8 from 5? Why can't you?" David stands at his table and ponders what Anna just threw out at him. Then he reaches for a piece of paper, draws a line, marks an arbitrary spot for the number five, and "proves" to Anna that you can indeed move back eight spaces from 5.

"Yeah, but here are five crayons and I can't give you eight 'cause I only have 5 – see!?" Anna suggests.

David gets that puzzled look on his face, Anna isn't sure where her realization that 5-8 doesn't work might lead her, and along comes Lance.

"5-8? Ummm, that's... negative 3!" Lance declares and moves on without giving the two friends an explanation.

This second grade class is involved in a math problem or scenario that was designed to expose them to the phenomena of place value and regrouping. It's the middle of the school year, and the children are comfortable with the idea that ones can be grouped together to make tens – they are less comfortable with the reversal of that process and the suggestion that tens can be broken apart to create separate ones. The lesson (or 'math time' as we call it, because math rarely looks or sounds like a typical lesson) began with a group meeting on the carpet. Some children shared their work from the day before, others brought pieces of paper or collections of Unifix Cubes, designed to add visual components to their explanations and findings. The sessions on the carpet tend to resemble a group of very young researchers who have come together to share with one another the discoveries they have made. But these sessions also bring out the confusions that children still harbor about certain concepts, or the misconceptions that they carry with them. For some, the discussions and the explanations provided by their peers will help to 'turn the light bulb on', but others will need exposure to more concrete scenarios and guided explorations into the areas that are puzzling to them. It is not uncommon for a few children to argue, for example, that $5-8=3$. But it is not my place to step in and attempt to correct this error in thinking. For one thing, they are right in thinking that $5-8=3$ – it's negative 3, to be sure, but they are on to something... For another, I have found that I cannot get a child to see how his/her thinking might be skewed – the child needs to make that discovery him/herself! Only the child can see and discover math phenomena – all I can do is provide guided experiences which, in due time, will lead the child to make discoveries and to construct the meaning. And only after meaning has been constructed will a child be able to make sense out of procedures and applications.

It took the class a while to determine how many of the 35 cars were left in the school parking lot after 8 had driven off. Some children simply counted back. Some drew pictures – thirty-five more or less elaborate cars, of which eight were either crossed off or erased. Several children had built a snake of Unifix Cubes – 27

of one color and eight of another. Still others had made Unifix stacks of ten cubes with several loose cubes off to the side. A few children had collected thirty-five cubes of one color and a set of eight of another color. Lance had drawn a number line that showed 35 and his subsequent subtraction of 8. After his exchange with Anna and David, he had added a second number line. This one showed an array with a spot marked 0 and a line extending to both sides of 0. He had indicated 5 on the right side of 0 and drawn little hoops to the left to indicate his subtraction process. The hoops went beyond 0 and ended on 3, in front of which he had written in big letters *negativ*. As I watched and listened to the children, I took note of interesting and sometimes misleading interpretations, and probed and queried. "What did you do here?" I asked, or "Hmmm, from 35 to 33 is only 2, and yet 8 cars left the parking lot..." Socrates, I imagine, might have been proud – or at least bemused!

A while later, when I feel that we have exhausted our attention span or the scope of our conceptualizing, the children return to the carpet for our follow-up discussion. There is much to talk about! The give-and-take that ensues is a most precious time of children learning from each other, children sharing experiences, and children making discoveries. They are, in short, constructing their own meaning of mathematical concepts. My role during all this had been to listen, attempt to follow the thinking of seven year-olds, ask probing questions or make guiding comments, and validate each child in his or her process of finding meaning. My role had not been to state an algorithm or a mathematical procedure. In fact, it would be another several sessions similar to the one described here before we would begin to introduce anything remotely resembling a traditional algorithm. It would take us at least until that moment when all children showed a readiness for an algorithm, and that wouldn't be the case until everyone had constructed the concept of regrouping in subtraction.

Why have I embraced this form of teaching math? I believe that it empowers children like no other methodology or philosophy of teaching to make connections, to make discoveries, and to become responsible in the learning process. I also believe that a constructivist approach to mathematics education is the only viable method – nothing else will allow a child to internalize a concept. The alternative is to teach procedures and strategies, but teachers run the risk of exposing children to ideas for which they have not developed a readiness and which are not grounded in sound conceptual understanding. This, in turn, leads children to become proficient in a process without becoming proficient in the concept. It's somewhat akin to being able to fluently read elaborate chapter books – but not understanding at all the plot or the story line. One does little good without the other.

And so the seven year-olds in my room continue to shape their mathematical understanding. They build and take down, think and rethink, listen and argue, and in the end create solid and meaningful mathematical understanding. I suppose that I really am not the one who is teaching math – we all are!



What Makes Some Classes Cooperative While Others Are Not?

by Barbara Lee
Isles District
2007 Teacher of the Year

How many times have you asked yourself (or heard a colleague ask), "Why is his class so cooperative?" "Why are the students in her class so willing to participate?" I believe the key to a class that is cooperative and willing to participate is in how those students are treated by their teacher and how their teacher expects them to treat each other.

When the class standard is set and modeled by the teacher every day, students are very willing to cooperate. In my class, my students know that I am not going to ask them to do anything that I am not willing to do myself. I follow all of the class rules that I expect them to follow. Students know that the rules apply to everyone all the time. We don't make exceptions. If someone opens a soda in class, I don't have to say a word. Other students will remind that person that we have a class rule that says we cannot have open soda cans in the classroom. No one has to get upset or angry or even raise his/her voice. Just a gentle reminder is all that is needed. By the time second semester gets here, students no longer have to make a conscious effort to remember the rules. They have been modeled for them so many times that they have become "just the way we do things in Mrs. Lee's class".

Not only do I teach mathematics, I also teach students to be respectful. I model that for them because I truly believe that students are capable of learning and worthy of respect. Not only do they learn to respect adults, they learn to respect each other as well. We don't raise our voices or talk meanly to each other. We don't criticize another person or their work unless it is in a positive way. That means that we offer suggestions as to how it could be improved upon. My students are always courteous to each other, to me and to other teachers and adults at our school. I hope that this continues on in other aspects of their lives and in all dealings with other people. Of course, I can't be with them 24 hours a day; but I can hope that they have learned how to be respectful and courteous and that it has become a part of their personality. Cooperative classes with students participating in a positive way are the result of good teaching and good role models.

"I touch the future. I teach."
Christa McAuliffe



Maximizing Healthy Lifestyles through Physical Education

by Vicki O'Brien
Mediterranean District
2007 Teacher of the Year

DoDEA Schools have purchased the latest technology and equipment to support the shifting paradigm of physical education to a lifetime fitness approach that places the emphasis on fitness and physical activity. Promoting and teaching healthy habits and developing a positive attitude toward physical fitness have a very important place in our curriculum. Turning kids onto physical fitness has been a true joy for me; seeing kids moving to learn and learning to move. By giving kids the tools necessary to become physically active at an early age and providing opportunities for them to be active, they stand a better chance to lead a healthier, happier, improved quality of life.

My role as a physical educator has become one of a facilitator, an encourager, a team builder, and a motivator. My beliefs are demonstrated in my teaching style as my students are actively and meaningfully engaged in the learning process and performance through total active participation. Being resourceful has allowed me to locate and utilize community and local nationals to enhance my programs.

The new face of physical education has evolved into new courses that take the focus of competition and sports to one that promotes life long fitness and experiential learning. Below are examples that illustrate this new approach.

The New Physical Activity and Nutrition Course

DoDEA increased the graduation requirement for physical education from 1 credit to 1.5 credits. Physical Activity and Nutrition (PAN) is the new course that the high school students are taking after completing Personal Fitness and Lifetime Sports respectively. This course provides a variety of opportunities for students to experience alternative non-competitive physical activities. Courses that teach only sport skills and competition are not sufficient. High school PE offers the last best chance to change physical activity habits and helps reduce the health risk associated with inactivity. Thus, the reason physical education must move from emphasizing sports skills to teaching skill recognition and focusing on a lifetime fitness approach.

Tenth grade students are engaging in noncompetitive and nontraditional activities such as spinning, canoeing, mountain biking, weight training, salsa dancing and "Dance Dance

Revolution" (DDR). Within each unit students are demonstrating:

1. Knowledge of readiness skills
2. Conditioning activities that develop the basic fitness areas needed for the activity
3. Self-assessments
4. Analysis of energy expenditure, caloric need and weight management as they relate to the physical activity
5. Awareness of community resources

Students keep weekly fitness logs and dietary menus that they are able to enter into a software program, which analyzes their fitness levels and caloric/nutritional intake. This information has proven to be extremely valuable as they experience alternative activities while incorporating the latest technology to measure fitness levels subsequently impacting their physical activity patterns.

Adventure Education at Livorno Takes Students to New Heights

Livorno Unit School once again is offering Adventure Education as part of the Middle School Wheel Initiative. Adventure Education is experiential learning through the group dynamics of team building, trust activities, and problem-solving initiatives. Participation in Adventure Education encourages students to challenge themselves by stretching their perceived limits. Opportunities in this class offer risk-taking moments and provide life enhancing experiences within a supportive environment both physically and emotionally. Carefully sequenced and thoughtfully processed initiatives prepare students for new adventures, which become learning experiences rather than an adrenaline rush.



Tim Black, Okinawa District Teacher of the Year, entertains the banquet crowd with his original composition, "The Teacher in Me"



Look What WE Can Do!

by Katie O'Connor
Georgia/Alabama District
2007 Teacher of the Year

As Teacher of the Year for the Georgia/Alabama DDESS District, I've had a great revelation – it's not about ME! Realizing our #1 CSP goal of Highest Student Achievement takes a committed learning community. This was demonstrated so vividly through a phenomenal event that took place at Maxwell Elementary School.

A spark was ignited by one of our teachers and that spark exploded into a collaborative effort that brought about MARS (Making Aerospace Real for Students) Day. The "Mars Team" consisted of teachers, PTO members, Civil Air Patrol members, and even a team from NASA! Two months of brainstorming, making plans, and working through the logistics resulted in a learning experience that the Maxwell students will remember for a lifetime.

The focus for MARS Day was to heighten students' awareness about space. However, as time grew near for take off, the team quickly realized that content standards in Math, Social Studies, English/Language Arts, Music, PE, and Science would all be involved. Twenty-four hands-on activities were set up that centered on the MARS Day theme. PTO, teachers, and community volunteers were arranged to man the "space stations." We were ready for lift off!

The MARS day activities began with a "History of Flight" parade. Classes researched different eras in the history of flight and portrayed them through posters, banners and costumes. The students learned the song "Up, Up and Away" and sang it in unison as the Civil Air Patrol helped to launch hot air balloons. Following the official countdown, students were "launched" into their MARS Day activities.

Throughout the day squeals of excitement could be heard as students launched handmade rockets, rode in simulated planes to Mars in search of jeweled rocks, and designed paper airplanes. Sounds like a lot of fun? It was! But more importantly, learning was taking place. Students predicted how far those airplanes would fly and then measured the distance. Our "astronauts" learned how to live in space from the NASA team that came from Huntsville's Space and Rocket Center. They participated in physical training on the obstacle course and found out about

centrifugal force by riding in a simulator. The mission was accomplished and all astronauts were returned safely to their classrooms at the end of the day.

What was most important about MARS Day? It was more than making learning fun and it was more than this one day phenomenal event. Have you ever noticed the news clips from the control center when NASA sends astronauts into space? Do you ever see just one person there, trying to make the mission successful? Absolutely not! There's a whole room full of professionals who each have a part in the process. That's how it should be in schools. Teachers, parents, students, and the community should be collaborating on a daily basis to make learning come alive for the students. That's how our mission of Highest Student Achievement will be a true success.



"Shoot for the moon...even if you miss, you will land among the stars!" - Les Brown



Reach All -Teach All!

by Timothy Black
Okinawa District
2007 Teacher of the Year

The old African proverb, "It takes an entire village to raise a child!" speaks volumes! Our ability as educators to collaborate while surrounding our students with 'Village Elders', grooms them for both great artistic endeavors and adventures in life. It is crucial to their success. DODEA understands our students' development is most greatly enhanced when we promote and maintain effective partnerships and communicate our shared ideals with one another.

Teaching is a calling like that of the mission-field. In this spirit, I've realized two very important lessons that have served me well throughout my teaching career. First, I absolutely love to teach and can't think of anything else I'd rather do. From the moment I meet my students, my passion for teaching must be obvious! Secondly, at the end of the day, children may not remember exactly what they've learned, but they will never forget how we made them feel. We empower young people to feel good about themselves. Hopefully, it's the reason we became teachers.

While change simply for change's sake is never desirous, neither is holding onto the age old adage of, "We've never done it that way before!" Promoting innovation helps meet the specific needs of my community while embracing a social-entrepreneurial spirit in my teaching. The scholar comes to rest when he expresses an idea. But the teacher, as social entrepreneur, goes beyond the immediate problem to fundamentally change communities, societies, and the world. I relish the opportunity to represent all DoDDS-Okinawa teachers in this manner. I believe it is my duty to afford students life-changing experiences by setting and accomplishing attainable goals.

I teach about life through music, the international language which has long played that crucial role in successful community building in all cultures of the world. For many, within our circle of support, music in our schools provides the connection families need while serving abroad. My purpose is to provide musical opportunities for our citizens and help establish ongoing multi-generational activities that bring people together.

Today's teachers are obligated to groom the next generation of leaders, taking a personal responsibility for their successful integration into society. I feel that while tradition holds a child's parents accountable for his/her behavior within society, it is the teacher who acts proactively in the parent's stead and intervenes on his/her behalf at every turn. Clearly, students (my own

children included) spend more quality time with teachers each day than with their at-home guardians. As a parent, I insist my children be influenced by the ideologies introduced at school. We must expect nothing but excellence from our teachers and give them permission to change our children's lives!

No two students learn in exactly the same manner. The same can be said of teachers, none of whom have been groomed for their profession in entirely the same way. Daily, I lead by example, drawing upon my own experiences as a student in making myself a more effective teacher, asking myself, "Would I enjoy doing this if I were the student?" I encourage the process of learning as more important than the product; participation and effort are more important than perfection. I relish the times I've experienced failure as both student and teacher perhaps more than the recognition that comes with success. I allow students the opportunity to create, investigate, compare, contrast, doubt and rejoice in their failures as much as their successes! Failure is not only a first-step on the pathway to success, but also one of life's many inevitabilities we must all learn to manage. It is one's response to failure, that resilience, that truly defines character. In this, the Information Age, students are inundated with more sound-bytes than they can process without our guidance. I act in partnership with parents to help their children disseminate fact from fiction, right from wrong, good from evil. Using these life skills, students have begun to retain and comprehend more of what they learn, and apply them both in and out of the classroom.

Successful teachers and administrators surround themselves with great people and then let them do their jobs! I am obligated to tap into and meet the needs of both my highest achieving 25 percent and saving the lower-achieving 25 percent from slipping through the cracks. Each child's "Skills Inventory" is utilized for planning, coordinating and implementing the successful community events our public has come to expect. What better legacy can we leave with our students, having made connections and nurtured life-changing relationships, than to watch them emerge as the next generation of leaders?

We succeed as teachers by creating opportunities for our children never afforded us by addressing the needs of our very brightest and gifted young leaders. The bar of excellence has been raised to a new level within the reach of all. Clearly, my greatest joy is being a teacher! Let us resolve now and forever in these important ways to 'Reach All - Teach All!'

2008 Teacher Forum Announced

The DoDEA Teacher Forum will convene at DoDEA Headquarters, Arlington, Virginia, November 5-8, 2007. The 2008 DoDEA District Teachers of the Year will be invited to attend. This annual event provides a forum for DoDEA teachers to discuss current educational issues. The four-day event may also include visits to the Smithsonian Institution and the Pentagon.



Our Annual "Invention Convention"

by Karen Van Balen
Heidelberg District
2007 Teacher of the Year

We have had an annual "Invention Convention" at our school for many years, which has involved the fourth-grades and our multi-age classes. Using higher-level critical thinking skills and creative problem solving, our students have made inventions for display at the "Invention Convention". They have been ingenious, young inventors in solving their problems, by inventing something unique and useful. The focus is on the process of research, creativity, imagination, and inventing. It is an integrated, cross-curricular program, which provides a multitude of experiences for our students.

The students use the "Big 6" program to research famous inventors/ inventions and write reports. These posters and reports are displayed on the walls of our gym, at the convention. They write and perform TV commercials, which are videotaped and shown on TVs all around the gym, during the "Invention Convention". Each student uses various forms of technology. We make formal business cards, which include items such as; company name, invention name, and a self-created picture of his/her invention (from a special computer program). The classes make formal ID cards and wear them, during the convention.

At the convention, the students greet visitors and parents, explain and demonstrate their inventions, and pass out their business cards. Basically, they perform their TV commercials for visitors, answer any questions about their inventions and/or the process of problem solving and inventing.

The "Invention Convention" is a fantastic program, which enables all students to be successful in a creative and inventive way.



Be the Change You Want to See in This World

by Jennifer Smith
Korea District
2007 Teacher of the Year

In order to earn the title "Teacher of the Year," a great more is required than what goes on in the classroom. As part of the Teacher of the Year process, candidates were asked to describe what they do to strengthen the teaching profession. That is quite a mandate, and a wonderful opportunity to assess ourselves as expert educators. In order to grow to our full potential, both individually and as a profession, we must continually build upon the steps that we have trod before, as well as move along new paths.

We get stronger by continuing to learn. Brain research shows us that as long as we are learning; our brain cells continue to flourish. It is only when we stop acquiring new knowledge and skills that our brain cells start to atrophy. And the most powerful classrooms hold a journey for both the educator and the students. As Loris Malaguzzi wrote, "Learning and teaching should not stand on opposite banks and just watch the river flow by; instead, they should embark together on a journey down the water. Through an active, reciprocal exchange, teaching can strengthen learning how to learn." Beyond the personal level, our students change every decade. The culture which creates them transforms, which means we too must evolve. Great teachers commit themselves to continuous improvement, thus inspiring and supporting others to continuously improve.

We get stronger by connecting with other teachers and sharing our experiences. By being active participants in school improvement, teachers make the process meaningful, open themselves to new options and support others in their continuous professional development. By serving as mentors, we may be supporting a single teacher, but that support affects an entire classroom, thus strengthening the school. And that is just the consequence which occurs during that first year. The potency of mentoring grows exponentially – and it can only help strengthen a mentor teacher by giving the opportunity for self analysis and reflection.

We strengthen the teaching profession by our strength of commitment. We can see it in the teachers who are in the school on weekends, breaks and until late into the night. We can see it in those who create extra opportunities for learning within their communities. We see it in those who sponsor and coach extra-curricular activities, without regard for equal, or possible any, compensation for their time. We see it in the money teachers spend out of their own pockets to support their programs.

It is at the closing of the school year I set aside some time – usually after I have boarded the flight heading Stateside – and reflect on what I have learned, how I have grown and the direction of my next steps as a teacher. This year, I will add to my personal analysis a broader question, "What have I done to strengthen the profession?"



2007 DoDEA Teachers of the Year: (from left to right) Sitting: Carol Johnson, Kentucky District; Mary Katherine O'Connor, Georgia/Alabama District; Patricia Laney, DoDEA Teacher of the Year, North Carolina District; Timothy Black, Okinawa District; Dorothy Lassey, South Carolina/Fort Stewart District; middle row, standing: Linda Anders, New York/Virginia/Puerto Rico/Cuba District; Karen Van Balen, Heidelberg District; Jacqui Gustafarro, Kaiserslautern District; Jennifer Smith, Korea District; Barbara Lee, Isles District; back row, standing: Vicki O'Brien, Mediterranean District; Stefan Zappey, Bavaria District; and Eric Eisaman, Guam District. Not pictured: Bonnie Seeley, Japan District.

DoDEA Teachers of the Year 1990-2007

2007

Patricia Laney
North Carolina District

2006

Patricia Salerno
Mediterranean District

2005

Irene Dugdale Lee
Korea District

2004

Joyce Schenck Loyd
Kentucky District

2003

Deborah Burney Hadley
Fort Campbell District

2002

Jolene Jenkins
Fort Campbell District

2001

Millie Harris
Fort Benning District

2000

Jamey Olney
Hessen District

1999

Catherine P. Tillman
Hessen District

1998

Brenda S. Posey
Kaiserslautern District

1997

Frank C. Pendzich
Hessen District

1996

Christine L. Cole
Brussels District

1995

Mary H. Mendoza
Panama District

1994

Sally J. Yoshida
Korea District

1993

Robert "Lucky" Moore
Heidelberg District

1992

Jacquelyn Watts Hinton
Kaiserslautern District

1991

Mary E. Micallef
Rhein-Eifel District

1990

Pamela K. Barney
Heidelberg District