

**Destin Nuts & Bolts
Student Motivation Symposium**
June 12-15, 2012



**Boulder Nuts & Bolts
Student Motivation Symposium**
July 26-29, 2012



www.nutsandboltssymposiums.com

**FROM THE
WORK ZONE...**

I gained a lot of tips and strategies that
I can utilize in my classroom.
– Erica Harris,
Nuts & Bolts participant

Low-Cost PD

There aren't a lot of Professional Development dollars available for educators these days, but you can make each dollar stretch a bit by purposeful sharing on your team. Perhaps one of your team members took a class over the summer or is taking one now, or someone attended a workshop or seminar. Another person may have come across a book that made him or her excited about trying a new approach in the classroom. By making time to share these experiences, everyone can grow professionally.

Many teams set aside one team meeting each week for professional development activities. While teams might use that time to watch a webcast, discuss a book chapter, or read a professional article, sometimes having one team member share new learnings would be equally beneficial.

A team member who has information to communicate might offer a demonstration or teach a mini-class or show other team members how he or she is using the newly learned concept in class. Key points from a workshop could be highlighted; new research recently learned in a class could be shared; a hands-on activity would definitely be enjoyable.

Studies show that when individuals are responsible for disseminating what they've learned with their colleagues, they get more out of the experience themselves. Each individual professional development opportunities might be fewer, but everybody gains when teachers take the time to share.

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the time to share.



Check out these valuable websites for teachers:

Glogster-edu.glogster.com
Polleverywhere.com
Blabberize.com
Wordle.com

Brainflips.com
Voicethread.com
Jogtheweb.com/jog
Thatquiz.org



JACK SAYS:

Always set clear expectations for your students. The more consistent you are, the more likely they are to respond.

Jack Berckemeyer is the Director of Professional Development for Incentive Publications. Visit his website at www.jackberckemeyer.com

It's Almost the Holidays –Can I Smile?

One certainly hopes that anyone new to teaching no longer still believes in the old adage “Don’t smile until Christmas.” Even when the phrase was broadly used, nearly everyone knew that it had little to do with smiling, and everything to do with assuring that students were clear on a teacher’s policies and procedures. In fact, most middle-grades teachers realize that smiling and using humor in the classroom is a must for building relationships and providing an engaging classroom experience.

It is true that not everyone is funny and teachers are not expected to come up with one-liners, gags, or jokes at every turn. However, using a cartoon as part of a presentation or sharing a funny anecdote can go a long way toward letting students know that a teacher is “human.” Additionally, research shows that learners have more success when the concepts are couched in a humorous or positive tone.



Laughing at oneself is a huge benefit to anyone trying to build a relationship (as we are with our students). When we are willing to accept our own failings, other people feel more comfortable with us. This need for comfort is especially true of young adolescents who generally feel inadequate and think they can never “measure up” or that teachers believe themselves infallible.

Of course, middle schoolers themselves can be extremely funny. When appropriate, laugh with them! As long as the humor is not at the expense of another, it can lighten the atmosphere in any classroom. A teacher can even use these occasions as teachable moments about humor based on incongruities and irony rather than put-downs. Go ahead and smile—it’s good for everyone!



Ninth-Grade Academy

Mid-term exams coming up? You’d do well to remember that most high school dropouts fail at least 25

per cent of their ninth-grade courses, while only 8 per cent of high-school completers experience the same difficulty (Letgers & Kerr, 2001). For some of your students, the exam counts as 60 per cent of their grade. Without proper preparation many ninth graders are likely to fail.

When these students were in the middle grades, they experienced tests and assessments, of course, but rarely one that covered several weeks’ worth of learning, as some ninth-grade exams do. You can lower your school’s failure rate by assisting your ninth-grade students as they prepare for exams.

What kind of test? Different test formats entail differing study techniques. True/false tests require a broad range of knowledge about the material as well as close-in reading for comparison. Multiple choice tests are easier—recognition plays a big part in

getting the answer right. Fill-in-the-blank or short-answer tests also provide clues in the text. Essay exams call for a wide range of skills, but often look for knowledge of key concepts rather than details. If students know in advance the type of test, you can help them study accordingly.

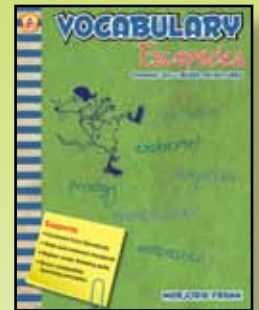
How to study? In ninth grade, each teacher should spend time teaching students how to study for the subject as well as for exams. Some students think that they should just reread the material or “think” about the information presented. Others study useless details while ignoring major ideas. A few give up before they start because they don’t know how to break down into smaller parts what seems to them to be a huge task. Ninth graders need guidance on organizing their study procedures.

What else? Remind ninth-graders to take these exams seriously, to get help if they don’t understand something, and to try to eat right and get sleep before the exams. We want our ninth graders to be successful so that they will continue their high school journey. Help them get over the exam hurdle right away.

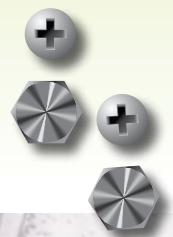
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BLUEPRINT is published by Incentive Publications for all those working to educate adolescents.

ABOUT THE EDITOR: Judith Baenen, a former classroom teacher, speaks and writes about middle-grade students and the issues that affect them. She is a coauthor for Incentive Publications’ *Elements of Effective Teaching* professional development curriculum.