

## Plagiarism—stop it before it starts!

Students have been told that they should not copy the work of others and use it as their own. But few of them know how to use others' ideas properly. This is especially true when students do research using books and the Internet. Instead of just telling your students about the penalties for plagiarism, show them how to avoid it.

- Using a sample from a book or Internet site, teach students how to glean the main ideas without copying the entire entry.
- Next, show students how to use their own sentence structure to convey the main ideas. Their sentences won't be as polished as the original, but that is not what is important.
- Instruct students how to use quotations to back up their thoughts. It's okay to use others' words if they are the only ones that fit just right. Show students how to assign credit to the author.
- Find time to have students practice paraphrasing. Some of the best authors in the world are good paraphrasers. This is a good time to introduce the thesaurus! Be sure to point out the difference between paraphrasing and substituting word for word.
- Remind students that teachers nearly always know the difference between student work and professional writing.

## For CyberCitizens

You want your students to use the Internet for research. Since they encounter many different sites in the course of completing the assignment, make sure they ask these questions regarding the possible bias of the site:

1. Who created, controls, owns this site?
2. What is the main purpose of the site?
3. What points of view are being presented?
4. Are any points of view being left out?
5. How recent is the information offered? Does that matter?
6. Is there a way of cross-referencing and determining the validity of the information?

We want our students to know that not everything on the Internet is automatically true. Sharpening these questioning tools will help them approach information with greater discrimination.



**“...not  
everything  
on the Internet is  
automatically  
true.”**




### JACK SAYS:

“Here's a creative way for adolescents to show what they stand for: Each student draws an outline of his or her foot, then lists things they believe inside the outline.”

Jack Berckemeyer is the Director of Professional Development for Incentive Publications. Visit his website at [www.jackberckemeyer.com](http://www.jackberckemeyer.com)





## Does Your Classroom Need an Extreme **MAKEOVER?**

Take a good look at your classroom. Is it truly a good learning environment? Start with those areas over which you have control: the walls, the seating arrangement, the overall comfort, the organizational system, the amount of clutter. Is it really working for your students?

### **THE WALLS**

Even if the paint is peeling or a truly awful color, you can make up by filling the walls with stuff interesting to students: posters, principles for everyday operations, news items, and most important—student work! Some teachers start with a cover-up—using wrapping paper or plain butcher paper to hide ugly walls. And, remember to change everything often—after two or three weeks it just becomes “wallpaper” to students.

### **THE SEATING ARRANGEMENT**

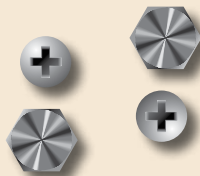
If you are lucky enough to have moveable chairs and desks, assure that it is easy for students to move into small groups or partner up. Is there room for students to move between desks and other furniture? Can students see each other during discussions or just the backs of others' heads? Does your desk really need to be in the front? Get student input as to ways to arrange the desks, especially if you have a crowded classroom. If you have space, set aside an area for learning

centers or quiet reading. If, on the other hand, space is at a premium, see if you can remove a piece of furniture (your desk, perhaps?), a file cabinet (to the hall? teacher room?), or storage. (Does everything for the whole year have to be on hand?)

### **OVERALL ENVIRONMENT**

Is the lighting adequate? Plenty of air? Be sure to look out for clutter—a neat (although not sterile) classroom makes for better learning. Get a colleague to come in as a second pair of eyes—you can return the favor by looking over his or her classroom as well.

We are creatures of habit. Too often the classroom arrangement today is the one you've had for years. Is it the best for students? If not, think about a makeover.



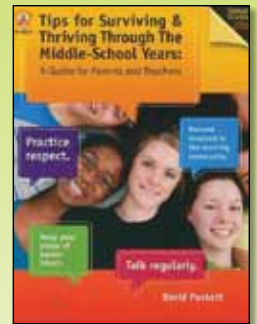
## **Ninth Grade Academy**

Don't be afraid to use your academic advisement time to discuss issues other than academics. Ninth graders are in the midst of a huge transition and generally feel too embarrassed to ask questions about such things as lockers, schedules, social issues, homework, friends, teachers, sports, clubs, and other expectations. Even if you have already given out plenty of information during the first few days, repeat it all. Those first few days were a whirlwind, and only a small percentage of the information got through.

## **IP** **PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT**

### *Tips for Surviving & Thriving Through The Middle-School Years: A Guide for Parents and Teachers*

By: David Puckett



This book is packed with advice gathered from experts on young adolescents. It includes: a straightforward explanation of middle-grades transitions; a checklist for helping with homework; ideas for introducing topics to discuss; top 10 ways to help adolescents transition to middle school; and building a parent's middle-school survival kit. Post the handy Tip Sheets and refer to them frequently!

**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.