



HIPPOCAMPUS

30 Palliser Drive • Hamilton • NZ 3210 • Tel 07 855 7101 • digests@xtra.co.nz

PRINCIPALS' DIGESTS NEWSLETTER 3 2012

WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF PRINCIPALS' DIGESTS.

The hippocampus has an essential role in the formation of new memories about experienced events.

Linda Braun, Editor

WHY WE NEED THE ARTS IN OUR SCHOOLS

Art education brings communities together and offers a language that transcends race, language, age, and ability.

The arts teach children that problems can have more than one solution, that there are many ways to see and interpret the world, and that the limits of language do not define the limits of our learning.

Teaching anything through music helps the memory; music helps children in maths and language development. Music helps them manage their emotions.

The arts help children find other ways of expressing their thoughts and feelings beyond the traditional. The arts as their own curriculum, integrated into core subjects, and infused in a school, contribute to all aspects of learning. They make a place feel good. They bring beauty.

Elena Aguilar

"Well Jack I was glad to learn how you felt about your summer's work & your coming school year. The secret of success is concentrating interest in life, interest in sports and good times, interest in your studies, interest in your fellow students, interest in the small things of nature, insects, birds, flowers, leaves, etc. In other words to be fully awake to everything about you & the more you learn the more you can appreciate & get a full measure of joy & happiness out of life."

Jackson Pollock & Family – letter to his son

HELPING WITH HOMEWORK MAY HELP LEARNING

Parents with a positive attitude towards homework, who feel competent in subjects, are more likely to positively reinforce children's motivation to do homework. Many parents help their children with homework either to encourage their learning or because they themselves enjoy learning.

Furthermore, parents who hold positive attitudes toward homework and feel competent in the subjects are more likely to support their children's psychological needs and reinforce positive motivation for doing homework.

If parents feel they are capable of helping their children, they have a more positive attitude toward homework and believe that it has an intrinsic value beyond getting a higher grade. These attitudes provide a supportive framework that prompt the children to do their homework out of intrinsic motivation – for the learning value, or because they enjoyed it rather than just because it was assigned.

Learning for intrinsic reasons has more positive emotional and cognitive benefits than learning out of a sense of duty, desire to please, or to avoid punishment, which can increase fear of failure, test anxiety and at worst even cause them to drop out of school.

GOOD PRINCIPALS KEEP TEACHERS

High rates of teacher turnover likely mean greater school instability, disruption of curricular cohesiveness, and a continual need to hire inexperienced teachers, who typically are less effective, as replacements for teachers who leave.

Research consistently finds that teachers who work in schools with large numbers of poor students feel less satisfied and are more likely to turn over, meaning that turnover is concentrated in the very schools that would benefit most from a stable staff of experienced teachers.

The study found that student SES is not the biggest factor. What leads so many teachers to abandon high-poverty schools is poor working conditions – and the most important element in working conditions is the principal.

The conclusion: assign the best principals to the poorest schools.

This research suggests that effective principals promote student achievement not by influencing students directly but by helping to create school environments that are conducive to student learning.

Building instructional capacity by maintaining a more stable teacher workforce is an overlooked avenue whereby effective principals can positively affect student performance.

The misallocation of high-quality principals may be an important source of outcome gaps between students in high-needs and low-needs environments.

“Can Good Principals Keep Teachers in Disadvantaged Schools? Linking Principal Effectiveness to Teacher Satisfaction and Turnover in Hard-to-Staff Environments” by Jason Grissom in *Teachers College Record*, November 2011

“Often, low-performing schools are islands, and their interventions are administered in isolation from their neighbouring schools. Just the opposite is needed.”

“What Really Works in Turning Schools Around?” by Alan Blankstein and Pedro Noguera in *Education Week*, Jan. 18, 2012

NEWS LITERACY FOR THE 21st CENTURY

It takes a lot of energy and background knowledge to wade through conjecture, lies, propaganda, bias and bad reporting. Doing so requires the ability to think critically, to be sceptical of information and to ask questions. News literacy...is actually a fundamental 21st century skill that all young people must develop to be engaged, active and informed citizens. Young people are bombarded with blogs, tweets, rumours, gossip, opinion, punditry, hype, spin, bias, propaganda and advertising.

News literacy is the ability to use critical thinking skills to judge the reliability and credibility of new reports and news sources.

Centre for News Literacy at Stony Brook University, quoted in ASCD Education Update January 2012

“The mission for school library programmes is to ensure that students are effective users of ideas and information by being critical thinkers, enthusiastic readers, skilful researchers, and ethical users of information.”

Zorana Ercegovic in “Letting Students Use Web 2.0 Tools to Hook One Another on Reading” in *Knowledge Quest*, January/February 2012

CHOOSE YOUR WORDS CAREFULLY

Teachers who respect students choose their words and tone carefully. They consciously:

- Listen to students—and hear them.
- Use positive humour, not sarcasm.
- Provide corrective feedback in ways that foster student effort.
- Acknowledge student growth.
- Use their words to defuse difficult situations.

Carol Ann Tomlinson

Principals' Digests - the only publication uniquely dedicated to the specialised needs of school principals facing constant demands for informative material for assemblies, newsletters, staff meetings, parents and speeches.