



Induction/Mentor Program Newsletter

D O L T O N S C H O O L D I S T R I C T 1 4 8

IMP Calendar



Professional Development:

Building Parent Relationships Thursday, October 22 from 3:30-5:30 at District Office

Differentiated Instruction November date TBA

ISAT Math December date TBA

There will be a number of professional development workshops offered this year by the IMP with the cooperation of the Assistant Superintendent. All professional development information will be communicated by email.

November Meeting Dates:

**First and second year protégés
Tuesday, November 10**

**Building mentors
Thursday, November 12**

The November meetings will be held at Riverdale School in the professional development room. The am meeting is from 7:20-8:10 and the pm meeting is from 3:40-4:30. The meetings are held in the am and the pm for your convenience. You need only attend either the am or pm meeting.

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H O M E W O R K

Homework is a frequent source of tension between teachers and students. For most teachers, homework is both a way to reinforce academic skills and an opportunity to teach children to be independent learners. For many students, however, homework is an unpleasant burden to be avoided, forgotten, or raced through.

The challenge for the teacher is to encourage students to take homework seriously and turn it in on time, and to not spend an inordinate amount of time dealing with homework stragglers.

Homework, of course, is the responsibility of students, and you'll want to reinforce that idea in various ways; however, parents also are a key resource in your efforts to ensure homework compliance.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Communicate your homework policy to parents. Send home a letter explaining to parents the purpose of

homework, when and how often it will be assigned, how much time you expect students to spend per night on homework, and what resources are available if their child has difficulty with an assignment. In your letter, you also might offer some homework tips to parents (for example, have your child do the harder assignments earlier in the evening when he is most alert).

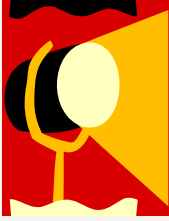
Make your assignments available by telephone or the Internet. Your school might have a system for recording homework assignments on a telephone message system or the Internet. If not, talk with your principal about starting such a program, or check out Teacher-Web.com, a Web site that allows you to post homework assignments, announcements, and other educational material on your own classroom bulletin board. That technology allows absent students to keep up with homework and prevents students from claiming they didn't know what the

homework was. You might also send to parents e-mail messages listing daily assignments, so they can monitor their child's homework.

Have students begin homework at the end of class. That allows students to ask questions about the assignment and enables you to identify problems they are having understanding the directions or completing the work. Pay special attention to students who typically appear to struggle with homework.

Reward students who have completed all assignments with an end-of-week activity. Schedule a Friday afternoon activity for students who have completed all homework and seatwork. Students who have work that is not completed must spend that period catching up on assignments in a separate area of the classroom or, if feasible, in another room with adult supervision.

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IMP Spotlight Section



TEACHER SPOTLIGHT

Mr. Tom Farmer

Mr. Tom Farmer is a seventh grade teacher at Lincoln Junior High. Mr. Farmer has incorporated his SmartBoard into his SFA lessons. While reading the book *On My Honor*, Mr. Farmer used his SmartBoard to pull up maps of the story's settings.

On another occasion, a passage he was reading included the word *vermillion*. Students were not familiar with this color, so Mr. Farmer again used the SmartBoard to pull up a picture of a vermillion colored flower, allowing students to visualize the color. Mr. Farmer deserves to have the spotlight on him. He was invited, along with Erin

Moore, to speak at the October DLT Meeting
 Congratulations Tom!



ADMINISTRATOR SPOTLIGHT



Dr. Patricia Moore has more than 30 years experience in education. She worked as a teacher in Harvey Elementary School District 152 for 21 years teaching 1st through 6th grade classes. Dr. Moore became a teacher because she loves

children and people and enjoys the bonds you can create with children. She felt that if she could help children this would be a way for her to pay back and help our society.

When she became a new teacher they did not have official mentors during that time, however she did have an unofficial mentor in her administrator who was very helpful and supportive. Parental support was also a key to Dr. Moore's success in the classroom. She encouraged parental involvement by communicating with the parents on a regular basis and encouraging their involvement in the school. When parents did not come to the school she

went to visit them in their homes.

Dr. Moore's advice for new teachers is to be yourself and to treat the students with respect. Children basically want to please their teachers; so if you treat them with respect it will more than likely be returned. Teachers should be willing to listen to what their students are saying. You can learn a lot about your students by listening to them. Dr. Moore has been a positive influence on many young lives; in fact one of her former students is now a teacher in District 148.



HOMWORK (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1.)

Establish an assignment folder for absent students. Keep on your desk a folder containing assignments dating back a week or so; students can go there to get missed assignments. Keep a separate sign-up sheet for each day's assignments; have students sign the appropriate sheet to indicate they obtained that day's assignments.

Have students complete a missing homework form. Require that students who fail to bring in homework complete a form for every missed assignment. The form might include the following questions:

Did you understand the assignment?

Why did you fail to turn in the assignment?

What is your plan to make up the assignment?

What can you do to make sure you do not miss any more assignments?

The simple act of filling out the form might be enough to deter students from missing future assignments.

Assign students homework partners. Partners can help each other make sure

assignments are recorded correctly and necessary materials are taken home. They also can call each other at home to check on the homework assignment.

Adapt the homework to students' needs. If an assignment appears overwhelming for a student, consider shortening it. For example, you might have that student do a four-paragraph composition instead of a longer essay. As the student's confidence and skills improve, you can increase the length of the assignment. If a student's skills are well below grade level, consider a different assignment altogether. If motivation, rather than ability, is a factor in the homework resistance, try to design assignments to reflect the student's interests and strengths.

ASK MAURY THE MENTOR...

"Ask Maury the Mentor" is intended as a place for new staff to ask questions pertaining to teaching in District 148. All questions will be considered anonymous unless the author indicates they would like their name used as a part of the article. Please send your submissions via email to Mike Hurst or send them via district mail to Mike Hurst at Informational Services. All questions will be answered by the IMP Team. Not all submissions will be printed.

**Hey Maury,
Some parents did not come to Open House in September. Do I need to contact them?
Sincerely,
Lonely at Open House**

Dear LOH,
I understand your situation. The district attendance was not 100%, so you are not alone in your concern. Consider calling the parent and highlight the things they missed that night. During the conversation, be sure to invite them to Parent/Teacher

Conferences in November. You may want to send home a "welcome packet" for parents with classroom information that you distributed at open house. Speak with other veteran teachers, your building mentor, and your principal for other suggestions.

Maury the Mentor

**Hi Maury,
My principal spoke with me about my upcoming evaluation. I don't really understand the process. What should I do?**

**Sincerely
Eyes on me**

Dear EOM,
The evaluation procedure is in the teacher contract. Your principal will have a pre-conference with you, at which time the two of you will meet to discuss the lesson to be observed. You should have a written lesson plan and be ready to discuss materials and procedures for the day of the observation with your principal during the pre-conference. As you prepare

the lesson, keep it simple. There is no need for a "dog and pony show" that day. Do not try a teaching strategy for the first time that day. Be sure to have clear objectives related to the teaching standards and design activities to engage the students in learning.

The principal will then observe the lesson on the announced day and time. The principal will complete the SD148 Evaluation Form based on the observation. A copy of the evaluation form can be found in the forms book in the office. Ask your mentor for help locating the evaluation form. The principal will then schedule a post-conference with you. During the post-conference, you will be shown the evaluation and ask to sign it.

Your signature indicates that you received the evaluation. It does indicate any agreement or disagreement with the evaluation. If you feel like the principal has missed a key point, you have the right to attach a letter of explanation to the evaluation. See the

teacher contract for the exact procedure.


As you prepare for your evaluation, remember you are a professional adult that makes decisions based on the needs of the students in your classroom. You have the power to make this a pleasant experience for yourself through the planning and preparation you complete leading up to that day. Good luck!

Maury the Mentor



A Plan for Success

Melissa Dunbar cannot bear watching her students fail. She is a 7th grade teacher at Comfort Middle School in Comfort, Texas, and a voting member of the Choctaw Nation. She is a passionate advocate for children.



"I am not satisfied unless there is a 100% pass rate," says Melissa. "The children that do not pass tear out my heart—especially those that try and still do not pass. But I do not see the number; I see the face of the child that did not pass."

Melissa believes that children failing is one of the hardest things a teacher has to deal with. So, she developed a plan for success. And her plan has been working!

Effective teaching. . . by Harry and Rosemary Wong

August 2009

Teachers Are the Difference

The First Day Management Plan

Now in her sixth year of teaching, Melissa Dunbar has helped her students achieve a pass rate of between 92%–99% over the years, with her ESL and Economically Disadvantaged students achieving a 100% pass rate this past school year! This seems impossible at a school where the demographics might predict much lower scores.

Melissa’s plan of success for her students begins on the first day of school with a PowerPoint presentation of her classroom management plan.

The presentation gives her students introductory information on herself—both as a teacher and an individual—and the classroom procedures.

The two crucial elements of organization in her classroom are **The Big, Red M and the Tool Folder**. She teaches students how to organize their work and their lives so that they can devote their time to learning.

Mollye Williams, Melissa’s principal, once informed Melissa what a couple of her students had shared with her. “Ms. Dunbar is all business. From the time we enter her class, until the time the bell rings, we work!”

On the first day of school, students learn the procedures for entering Melissa’s classroom. They fall into the classroom routine once they cross the threshold of the door. They don’t wait for the tardy bell to ring. They get right to work.

In the same location each day on the class board Melissa has a large red "M" which indicates the materials needed for class. Beneath the M is the learning objective for the day. This eliminates two questions asked by most students:

1. What do we need for class today?
2. Are we doing anything today?

Prior to the tardy bell ringing, the students sharpen pencils, turn in work, obtain materials for class, and begin their bell ringer. (Melissa’s bell ringers are Daily Oral Language, Sustained Silent Reading,

Higher Order Thinking Puzzles, or Journal Writing.) This allows Melissa time to greet students at the door and monitor the hallway. Students continue working on their bell ringer until Melissa has taken attendance and begins to teach. “With procedures in place, teaching feels natural and almost easy. I set boundaries that enable my students to build their own powerhouse of accomplishments,” says Melissa.

Melissa strives to make her students feel safe and relaxed, and emphasizes that it is all right to ask questions.

The Classroom Is a Safe Zone

There is a large sign on the wall that indicates that the room is a “Safe Zone.” The Safe Zone concept is elaborated on at the beginning of the year: The children are safe to express themselves, ask questions, and be the twelve-year-old children that they are.

This concept catches on quickly: “I can’t tell you how many times I have heard students say, ‘You can’t talk to me like that, this is a Safe Zone!’” says Melissa. The offending student must then say three nice things about the person they offended. This stops the insults and gives students the opportunity to stand up for themselves and others—knowing their teacher will back up them. Melissa says, “I share real life stories with them to try to get them to THINK. At this age, children often do not think past the immediate moment. It is important to guide them through thinking about the consequences of their actions. I spend a lot of time talking to the children about family, love, and I believe, and sincerely hope, they are more in tune with who they are by the time they leave my class.”

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WWW.YOURHOMEWORK.COM

YourHomework.com

GRADE LEVEL: K-12

CONTENT:

YourHomework.com is a free solution for posting homework and class assignments on the Internet. It is committed to "enhancing student-teacher-parent communications."

AESTHETICS:

The site has a simple,

to read format with lots of white space

ORGANIZATION:

The main areas of the site are easily accessed from the main page. All the internal pages have a top navigation bar for moving between the sections of the site or returning to the home page.

REVIEW:

Keep your parents and students informed of

Teachers set up their class files with easy fill-in-the-blank forms that can be accessed from anywhere, at anytime.

Students will find the homework help they need with the handy search feature in the **Homework Help** section. The database of rated sites can be searched by subject, grade level or keyword and results can be sorted by grade or rating. Reg-

at the site is free. There is a shopping mall where schools can participate in fundraising but participation is not required and no management by the school is necessary.



TEACHER TO TEACHER

Parent Teacher Conference Ideas

New teachers are understandably nervous about their first parent-teacher conferences. So much to say, so little time! If you plan ahead, parent-teacher conferences don't have to be another stressful routine in a teacher's job. Listed here are some helpful hints in the planning process.

Planning the Conference

- Fill out a preconference sheet on each student. This is a form that helps you to remember what you want to discuss with the parents.
- Provide adult size chairs
- Limit each conference to 10-15 minutes.



Conducting the Conference

- Greet parents warmly at the door
- Accompany parents to a place where you can sit together and talk comfortably.
- Always include the student in the conference. After all, how can we work as a team if the key player is not there?
- Start with the student's strengths and end with the student's strength
- Use materials from the student's work folder. It is much easier to demonstrate progress or show concerns in areas that the student needs to improve.
- Close the conference with some action steps

Teachers are the Difference (continued from page 4)

Be the Difference

The new school year is close at hand. As teachers we can close our eyes and hear the footsteps of children trudging through the hallways hoping they will end up in your classroom and you will be that one teacher. . .

- who has a never-give-up attitude and a whole briefcase full of instructional techniques;
- who can't wait for the bell to ring to start each day and is organized and ready so students know what to do;
- who delights in a challenge and has the expectation that every child is capable of success;
- who honors students with dignity and respect and expects the same in return;
- who is patient with works-in-progress and cares about the outcome;
- who wants to be the difference in students' lives and IS the difference in theirs

Choose to be the difference in your students' lives.

Wishing you a school year filled with hope and dreams come true for you *and* your students.

Harry & Rosemary Wong products: <http://EffectiveTeaching.com>



IMP Calendar (cont.)

December Meeting Dates

**Primary (Pre-K thru 5th grade)
Wednesday, December 2**

**Intermediate (6th thru 8th
grade) Thursday, December 3**

- The December meetings will be held at Riverdale School in the professional development room.
- Plan to attend the meeting with your building mentor. The am meeting is from 7:20-8:10 and the pm meeting is from 3:40-4:30.
- The meetings are held in the am and the pm for your convenience.
- You need only attend either the am or pm meeting.



The following teachers and administrators have contributed to this newsletter:
Mike Hurst, Lisa Davis-Smith,, Lil Husbands,
Sandy Krilich, Darlene McMillian, Nancy Brown, and Alisa Bivins.