

# News notes

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Welcome Jeff Price, Sherry Dunlay, and Dr. Bill Perry new coordinators for next year

Margo Buscher is leaving at the end of the year to take a position in El Dorado. It is closer to home.

**Jeff Price is a psychologist at Parsons. He will be a secondary coordinator for Independence, Coffeyville, and Caney. Jeff has been with Tri-County 607 for a few years and will step into the position August 1, 2009.**

**Sherry Dunlay is the transition coordinator for Tri-County Interlocal 607. She will be a secondary coordinator for Parsons, Cherryvale, Fredonia, and Neodesha beginning in the fall. Sherry has been with us in several positions. Last year she was a facilitator at Project Alternative.**

**Dr. Perry is new to our system and replaces Jo Lopez, elementary coordinator for Parsons, Cherryvale, Fredonia, and Neodesha, Jo Lopez is retiring at the end of this year.**

**Emily Brumley will continue as an elementary coordinator. She serves Independence, Coffeyville, and Caney. Emily has been in this role for three years. Emily is very good. She has great ideas!**

**Gifted have been up to some Blasts**

<http://www.schooltube.com/video/23208/Rubens-Tube>.



This new economic picture gives us a chance to really look at the essentials of what we do and how we do it. People are talking everywhere I go about ways to save and get the job done. Maybe that is something that should continue all the time. In thinking about the essentials, what do we need for the coming year? What could we do without? If you have ideas that you would share, I would like to hear them.

We will have some teachers leaving this year. If you know of a good one, please tell them to apply.

From the advantage news letter...

This is so boring...

This is so boring." How many times have we heard that from students in our classrooms? Frequently, the utterance of these words is the precursor to a discipline problem.

What do you think? A middle school assistant principal friend suggested this: "The more bored the student, the worse his/her behavior." He went on to explain that he seemed to have the most discipline referrals from those teachers he described as "less than exciting."

It didn't take us long to find that many other educators seemed to agree. Emma McDonald writes in her "New Teacher Advisor Column" that "Student misbehavior isn't always about bad attitudes and "keeping reps" (reputation). Many times student misbehavior in the classroom happens because of boredom."

[http://www.education-world.com/a\\_curr/columnists/mcdonald/mcdonald007.shtml](http://www.education-world.com/a_curr/columnists/mcdonald/mcdonald007.shtml)

She goes on to say "When students are bored in class, their minds begin to wander and they start thinking, 'I wonder what would happen if I...'" Then the little disruptions begin. The little disruptions pile up and turn into large disruptions. That scenario can go on and on until everything is out of control."

**Makes sense.**

When we looked into "boredom" we discovered something called a "Boredom Proneness Scale" that attempts to empirically measure a person's degree or state of boredom. This scale was developed by Farmer and Sundberg, and published in the Journal of Personality Assessment in 1986. The University of West Florida has a nice copy of it at their website. <http://uwf.edu/svodanov/boredom/bps.htm>

In "The Journal of Psychology" (1999) Watt and Vodanovich presented some interesting findings in their article "Boredom proneness and psychosocial development." The bottom line: Students who have a

low boredom-prone score (not easily bored) had significantly better peer relationships and were more "educationally involved" than those with higher scores.

<http://ajp.press.uiuc.edu/>

There are many other studies showing the problems associated with those students who are easily bored: they are depressed and have high anxiety (Farmer & Sundberg, 1986), they are impulsive (Watt & Vodanovich, 1992) and they are procrastinators (Blunt and Pychyl, 1998).

Educators are not (professional) psychiatrists or psychologists, but we certainly know that the traits described above are not what we are looking for in our perfect classroom. What to do?

In most cases, with thirty or so students in class, we will have "boredom proneness" scores ranging from the very high to the very low. To maintain a high-interest level and a low-boredom level (and therefore, a better behavior level) we need to keep all of those students engaged.

Paula Moore, teacher of the year in 2005 for Washington County (MD) and a 2006 USA Today All American Teacher, addresses student boredom: "Brain research indicates that the average attention span of teenagers is limited to five or ten minutes. As a result, I rapidly change activities and groupings so that students will be engaged and involved, preventing boredom and discipline problems." Simple, but sometimes we forget. Ask the best teachers in the building how they keep their students from being bored and the chances are excellent that they'll answer with "The key to preventing boredom is preparation."

<http://www.thinkport.org/CAREER/NEWTEACHERS/profiles/toys2005/moore.tp>



Why look at great teachers? Often we hear that one can learn from anyone. From effective people, we learn what to do; from ineffective people, we learn

what NOT to do. But, how much can we learn from ineffective teachers about being effective? We already know plenty about what NOT to do. Good teachers already know not to use sarcasm, not to yell at kids, not to argue with teens in front of their friends. We can always reap good ideas from successful educators. Working with students is never as simple as yes or no, bad or good, true or false. Teaching is more like an open-ended essay exam. We might NOT agree with the best essay but we could still learn from it. At the very least, we would probably see some new ideas on which we could build. We face many choices and just eliminating the inappropriate options doesn't move us forward.

We need to study effective teachers. One should not mimic every behavior of a good teacher, but, the practices of good teachers do not get in the way of their success—and others can learn from them. In order to learn one must do some self-reflection accurately and honestly. One must know how one is coming across to others, how their behavior is received, and work more effectively. We all struggle to achieve this self-awareness. We all know ineffective teachers but few of us would admit, even to ourselves, that we are one. Many ineffective teachers think they are doing a good job. Most teachers are doing the best they can—and most of the teachers I encounter are willing, some even eager, to learn a better way. Good teachers do their jobs and they do them well—day after day and year after year. They adapt to change without losing sight of what really matters. Think about it...if every teacher in a school were like the best teachers, would that be a great school? Most of us know that there is more to effective teaching than advanced degrees. Many teachers know what works best but they don't do it. It is relatively simple to be an effective teacher but it is not always easy. People skills are especially important. In a list of things that matter it is PEOPLE NOT PROGRAMS. In a book called What Great Teachers Do Differently 14 Things That Matter Most, by Todd Whitaker are chapters that could help almost any serious person be a great teacher. "The book describes the beliefs, behaviors, attitudes, and interactions that form the fabric of life in our best classrooms and schools. It focuses on the specific things that great teachers do and others do not." Check it out it is worth studying.

