



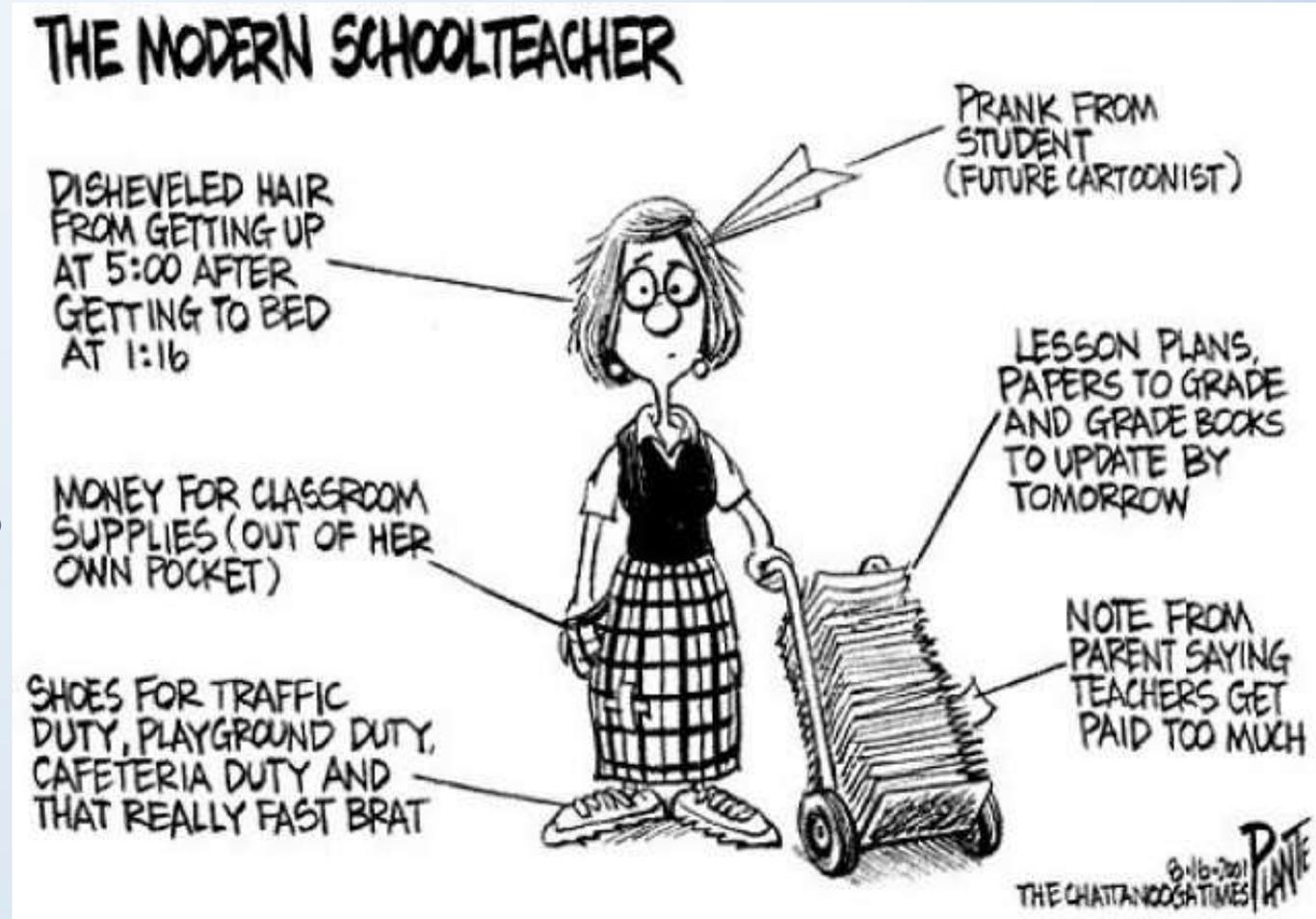
# How to be an Awesome Teacher -and- Still Have a Life.

By C. Kohn, Waterford WI

# Introduction



- Why I do this workshop (a.k.a. “What looming failure can teach you about teaching.”)
- What to expect from this workshop.
- What you want from this workshop: T.P.S. and discussion.



# Disclaimers

## 1. I'm not an expert and I don't claim to be.

- This is just what I had to do to survive.

## 2. You probably do a lot of this already.

- I don't have a magic ball – I just begged, borrowed, and stole a lot.

## 3. Not all of this works for everyone in every situation.

- We all teach in different places to different students.
- It's up to you to figure out what will work for you and what won't.

## 4. There are many ways to be a successful teacher.

- Avoid the trap of finding the “best” way to teach.
- Use reflection, trial and error, and feedback from your students and parents to guide your implementation of strategies.



# Disclaimers



5. I talk fast – slow me down if I go *too* fast 😊

6. It's ok to *not* be stressed.

- A lack of stress is not a sign of a slacker – it's a sign of a competent professional.
- Minimizing stress is the most vital solution to education's most urgent problem – a lack of qualified professionals.

7. Know your priorities.

- Teaching is like an airplane with fallen oxygen masks – put yours on first, then the masks of others. Your health and well-being come first because without you, nothing else can happen.

**It's smart, not selfish, to take care of yourself first!**



Source: [www.nea.org](http://www.nea.org)

# Timeframe and Format



- **Our circumstances:**

- We have a limited amount of time.
- We have too much material for this amount of time.
- Perhaps some of you want to leave a little early.



- **Solution:**

- Take a moment to skim through this packet.
- Highlight or mark the things that you know you want us to discuss.
- Once you've gone through the entire packet, star your top 3 priorities.
- We'll focus more on the priorities and breeze through the rest.

# Overview

1. Classroom Set-up Strategies
2. Teaching & Curriculum Strategies
3. Grading
4. Classroom Management Strategies
5. Extracurricular Management Strategies
6. Parent/Administrator Management Strategies
7. Standards, Teacher Effectiveness, PDP's, Licensure, Etc.
8. Having a Life



Source: [www.tolerance.org](http://www.tolerance.org)

# Classroom Set-up Strategies



# Classroom Set-up

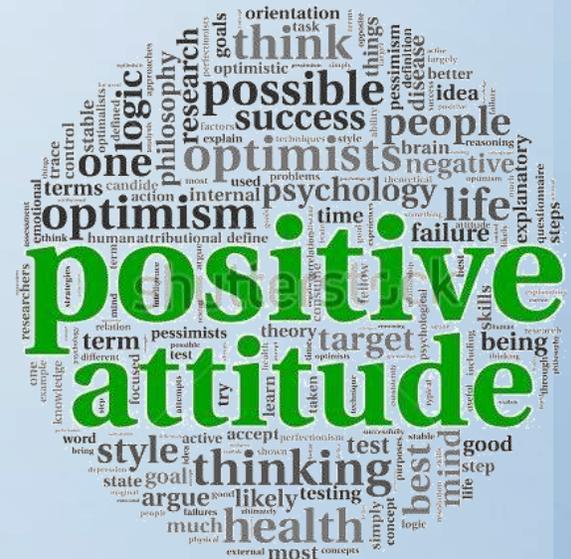


- **Make your room one of positivity.**

- Ensure that everything about your room ensures a psychologically positive experience for your students.
- Use ‘hello’ and the name of every student as they enter your classroom.
- Actively seek feedback from your students in order to create the most positive experience possible for them.
- If your classroom is the most positive environment in the building, they will want to contribute in a meaningful way.
- Always focus on the positive (*Most of you did a great job today!*).
- Handle criticism in private (*Jimmy, can you hang back for a bit?*).

- **Make your room one of proactivity.**

- Proactivity = “I will find a way.”
- Ban the words “**I can’t...**”; substitute it with the words “**I choose to...**”.
- Always eliminate excuses and convert them into solutions.



# Classroom Set-up

- **Have one spot for completed work. Enforce it as the only option for turning in submitted work. →**
  - If an assignment is lost, it ensures it is because of them and not because of you. This puts the onus on the students, not on you.
- **Give every student a mailbox. →**
  - Use the time you would spend handing back assignments for more productive purposes.
- **Hire a classroom/office manager.**
  - Seek donations from the community and use them to pay a student to do work that you don't have to do as a method to prepare them for future careers.



# Classroom Set-up

- **Eliminate ignorance - label everything with signs that use large fonts and simple language.** →
  - What is obvious to you may not be obvious to your students.
  - With 6-8 different courses a day, students need help navigating through high school.
- **Minimize disruptions with a “no knocking/no calls” system.** ↘
  - Anything that can be slipped under the door reduces interruption and allows you to utilize momentum in the classroom to keep students focused.
  - Any phone calls not pertinent to the class at hand should go to voicemail. Work with your administrators/secretaries to ensure this can happen.
  - The less interruptions you have, the more focused your students will be.
- **Get a cat for your classroom.**
  - It reduces stress and can enhance your curriculum. It's also great for marketing your program to new students.

**Agriculture**

**Office**

Here you can find  
your assignments,  
deposit money, and  
find printed items.

Please be  
Responsible – turn  
off your computer  
and monitor when  
finished. Thanks!

(And please replace this sheet  
when done. Thanks!!!)

**If you have passes,  
please DO NOT knock.**

**Instead, please slide all  
passes and notices  
under the door.**

**Knocking disrupts the class  
in progress.**

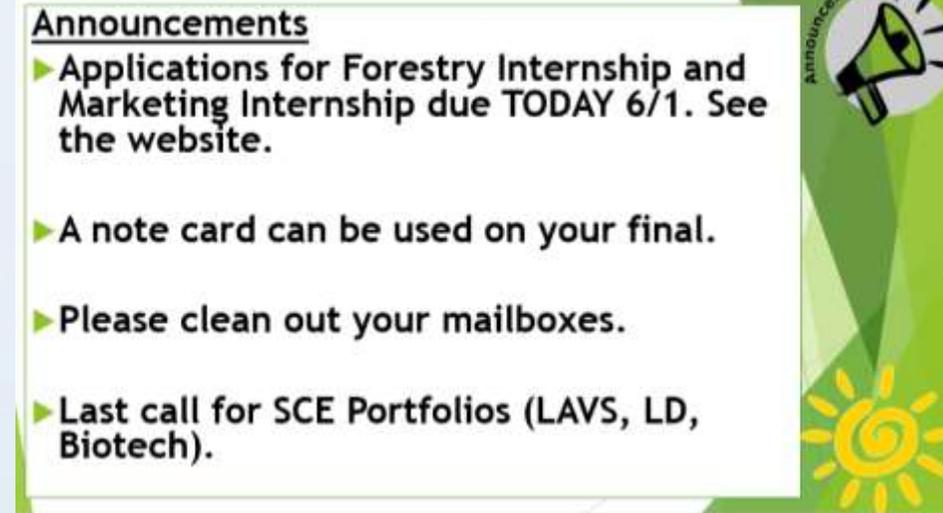
**Thank you for your help.**

# Teaching & Curriculum Strategies



# Teaching and Curriculum

- **Start before the bell rings.**
  - Have music playing as they enter. 30 seconds before the bell rings, turn off the music as a nonverbal cue to begin.
- **Play a slide show of your announcements on loop as students enter your classroom.**
  - Everything they need to know about class that day/week should be on the slides. Make sure they know it's their job to read it.
- **Have a question of the day.**
  - XKCD is a website with some great thinking questions.
- **We live in the internet age – have a simple but effective website with all assignments available at a click.**
  - Weebly is a free website creator that I use.



**Announcements**

- ▶ Applications for Forestry Internship and Marketing Internship due TODAY 6/1. See the website.
- ▶ A note card can be used on your final.
- ▶ Please clean out your mailboxes.
- ▶ Last call for SCE Portfolios (LAVS, LD, Biotech).



**Agricultural Sciences**  
Waterford Union High School

Our Mission: Waterford Agricultural Sciences seeks to create successful individuals, well without compromise, and a more sustainable world through an engaging and rigorous education, individual career experience, and personal development.

**Agribusiness, Semester, Curriculum**  
Note: This schedule is subject to change. Check regularly for changes and updates.

**Week 1 - Radish, Beans & the Scientific Method - Unit Overview**  
Monday: no school  
Tuesday: Course Intro  
Wednesday: Radish, Beans, Planting (see prep)  
Thursday: Lab - Plant Radishes, Apple Treatments (see wrap-up)  
Friday: Quiz - Scientific Method, Radish Beans Packet Due

**Week 2 - Lab Safety - Unit Overview**  
Monday: Lab Safety Day - No School  
Tuesday: Lab Safety Issues & Overview  
Wednesday: Fresh Lab Safety Issues & Overview  
Thursday: XXXX Lab Safety Day  
Friday: Carbon Cycle Video and Video on Radish, Beans Check-in/Info at the end of the 2nd period to PBS

**Week 3 - The Carbon Cycle - Unit Overview**

# Teaching and Curriculum



- **Have a Four-Day Week.**

- Use Monday-Thursday for instruction and use Friday for careers and personal development.
- If you have a snow-day/pep assembly/fire drill/etc., postpone your Friday so that you can finish your week without falling behind.

- **Keep your days consistent to add predictability and simplify planning. I use the following format:**

- Monday = Intro
- Tuesday = Instruction
- Wednesday = Lab/Application
- Thursday = Review & Assessment.
- Friday = Colleges, Careers, & Personal Development



# Teaching and Curriculum



- **Enable students to teach themselves.**
  - I use notesheets to allow students to teach themselves.
  - I then use formative assessments to detect any misconceptions and problems and correct them before a summative assessment.
- **Never teach longer than their age. Use brain breaks to allow their brains to ‘cool off’.**
- **Use group work whenever possible to teach real-world skills while reducing your grading and workload.**
  - Use peer reviews to ensure that the responsibilities are being shared equally.
  - Use bad peer reviews as a career preparation opportunity.
  - Students NEED this kind of feedback (next slide).

# Teaching and Curriculum



- The importance and value of group work and peer reviews.

The screenshot shows an NPR news article titled "Disagreeable Teens Fail To Understand Their Blind Spots, Research Reveals". The article is dated June 16, 2015, at 5:07 AM ET and is by Shankar Vedantam. Below the article title is a "Listen to the Story" audio player from the "Morning Edition" program, with a duration of 1:47. The player includes options for "Playlist", "Download", "Embed", and "Transcript". Below the audio player is a "SHARE" section with icons for Facebook, Twitter, Google+, and Email. The main text of the article begins with "Disagreeable teens tend to grow up into disagreeable adults. A 10-year study finds that disagreeable teens often have no awareness that their behavior is harming their relationships."

news ▶ science ▶ research news

## Disagreeable Teens Fail To Understand Their Blind Spots, Research Reveals

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Listen to the Story  
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+ Playlist    ↓ Download    <> Embed    ≡ Transcript

SHARE

Disagreeable teens tend to grow up into disagreeable adults. A 10-year study finds that disagreeable teens often have no awareness that their behavior is harming their relationships.



# Teaching and Curriculum

- **When a student is not paying attention, have them assess the responses of others.**
  - If they're not paying attention, they won't be able to answer a question.
  - However, they can assess the responses of others – this the highest level of Bloom's Taxonomy.
- **Be ready to punt – last-second lesson/sub-plan options.**
  - Class surveys – How are we doing?
  - Teach me – switch roles (student vs. teacher).
  - Internet News Scavenger Hunts.
  - YouTube Hide and Seek.
  - DVD's – find/create worksheets and keep a copy in the DVD case.
  - Consider a midterm exam for multi-day absences (as a form of college prep).



Grading





# Grading

- **Minimize or eliminate homework.**
  - Just because they're busy doesn't mean they're learning.
  - Homework should be a last resort.
- **Not everything has to be graded.**
- **Grade student work in the same way a boss assesses his or her employees. Almost all assignments can be graded with just 3 grades:**
  - + (100%) Exceptional: exceeded my expectations.
  - ✓ (80%) Sufficient: met my expectations.
  - - (0%) Insufficient: did not meet my expectations. Re-submit for a late grade.
- **Make-up Days: have a make-up day once a month.**
  - Separate students with missing work from those with no missing work.
  - Reward those with no missing work and good grades (video, food, etc.).
  - Work personally with those who are struggling or falling behind.



# Grading



- **Late work -**
  - Regardless of if it is received a day late or a month late, take a flat percentage off of an assignment if it's not received by the time you grade it.
  - We want all students to learn and complete the learning process.
  - It will be more punishment for a student to do an assignment two months after the deadline than if they are absolved of any responsibility by getting a 0.
- **Enter a “0” in the gradebook the moment it becomes late to motivate them.**
  - Include a blank on written assignments for justification for why it is late (e.g. *I was sick that day.*).
  - If it's legitimate, give them extra time for the time they missed (e.g. *gone a day, get a day*).
- **Make it feasible to get a B (both for the A-students and the C-students).**
  - Give hope to the C-students and challenge the A-students.



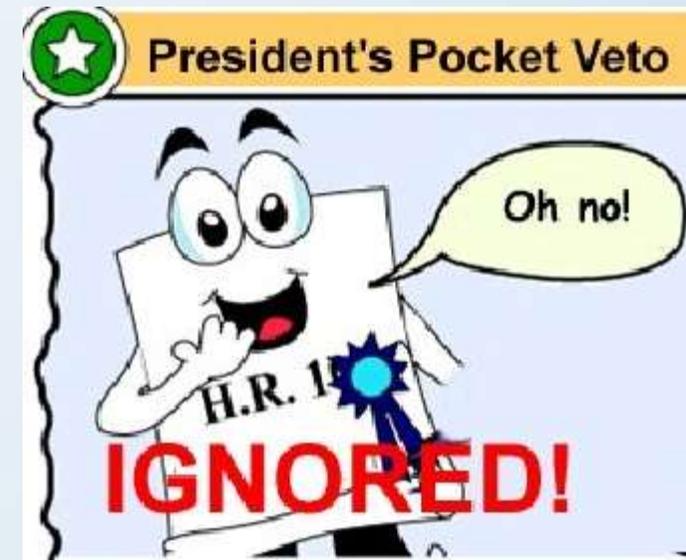
# Grading

- **Use the “pocket veto” method.**

- If you fall behind on grading, separate your grading into 3 piles – Urgent, Important, and “if I have time”.
- Take care of the urgent and important assignments and file away the remaining assignments in a location that is out of sight.
- See if it still needs to be graded after you’ve taken care of everything else.
- It might not even get noticed if you forget about it.

- **Grading in class can be a chance to reduce your workload while enhancing student comprehension.**

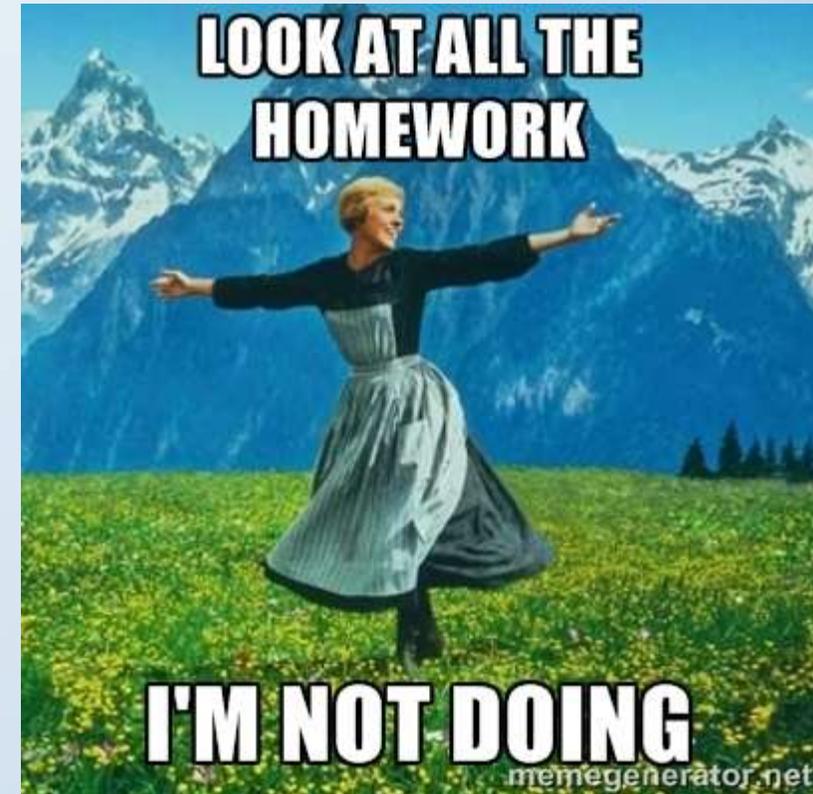
- When grading in class, keep track of which answers are marked wrong the most and then use that to guide a follow-up review session.



# Grading



- **Have students grade a formative assignment in class but allow them to go back and make changes.**
  - Have them clearly mark the ones that are wrong.
  - Ignore anything that isn't marked and check to see if they made the appropriate changes.
  - This might seem like “cheating”, but it can be a great opportunity for students to observe their own gaps in comprehension before a summative assessment.



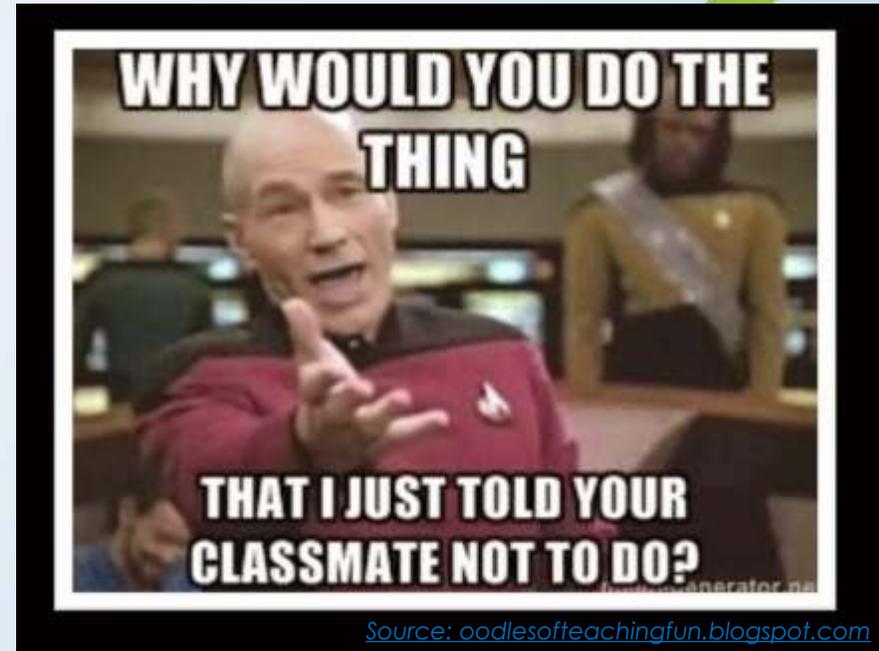
[Source: memegenerator.net](http://memegenerator.net)

# Classroom Management Strategies



# Classroom Management

- **You only need three rules:**
  - 1) Always Be Respectful of Everyone
  - 2) Always Be Safe
  - 3) Always Enable Learning.
- **Use the 3 Rules as the criteria for admission.**
  - If they violate one of the three rules, they have to leave until they are able to abide by them again.
  - This is what is most fair for everyone as a class (including you).
- **Begin every semester with a name/identity-based activity (ceiling tiles, license plates, etc.).**
  - Use this as a way to learn names and to learn about each student's ability to perform individually and in teams.



Source: [oodlesofteachingfun.blogspot.com](http://oodlesofteachingfun.blogspot.com)

# Classroom Management



- **Keep students in groups of 4 that change every month.**
  - Use standardized test scores and your own grades to pair high performers with struggling students.
  - Use your first-day activity to figure out who should never sit together (if they choose to sit by someone on the first day, they shouldn't be together again).
- **Have a set of dice. Allow students to discuss a question as a group of 4 and then use the dice to determine who will respond.**
  - E.g. one die is the group, the other is the person in that group.
- **Turn the Troublemakers into Classroom Tools.**
  - “Alice, it looks like you're done. Could you help me with this?”
- **Proximity Management/Cleaning – always be near the problems.**
  - By cleaning near the problems, you keep your room clean without having to yell or interrupt.



# Classroom Management

- **Rigorous curriculum keeps students busy.**

- Busy students with a challenging curriculum do not have time to misbehave.

- **Students with options & the ability to choose are happy students.**

- “I pick 3; you pick 1.”

- **Use sticker calendars to incentivize positive behavior.**

- Use a calendar and stickers to keep track of good days and bad days.
- Award points for a goal (e.g. a pizza party, field trips, etc.).

- **Use music as a timer (“By the end of this song, I’ll need...”)**



Source: [www.wkhsounselors.com](http://www.wkhsounselors.com)

# Classroom Management



- **Be the flight attendant of your classroom in order to separate insubordination from ignorance.**
  - We all know how to buckle a seatbelt, but we are told how to do so when flying in order to separate the ignorant from the insubordinate on a plane.
  - Similarly, use constant daily reminders, repetition, and signs to ensure that your students cannot hide behind ignorance.
  - *E.g. “That’s it for today; remember to push in your chairs and grab any garbage before you go and have a great day!”*
- **Use “Reason First, Emotion Second” Responses to Problems.**
  - I can’t let you do this because \_\_\_\_; when you do this, it makes me/them feel \_\_\_\_\_.

# Extracurricular Management Strategies



# Extracurricular Management

- **Have a great website and subscribe to a texting service.**
  - If you can get in their phones, you can get in their heads.
- **Have a locked safe-deposit box in your classroom for money, permission forms, and confidential materials.**
  - Like the one spot for completed assignments, make sure that students know that this is the *only* place that you will check for money.
  - Use deposit envelopes to have a paper trail for all money.
- **Hire a student accountant to handle and record all money (under your supervision).**
  - Provide them with a cushy place for their study hall once they're done.



# Extracurricular Management



- **The use of economics can avoid the need to yell at a student.**
  - Students are busy people nowadays. Use incentives in addition to a proactive positive culture to ensure their performance is sufficient. An understanding of the value of money is one of the most valuable lessons that we can teach.
- **Prepare your students for college, careers, and life by using financial incentives.**
  - For example, our students get 10% of their total fruit sales back as a commission check.
  - To receive their commission check, they must have their dues paid, school fees paid, attended enough meetings & events, etc. Their checks are held until all expectations are met.



# Extracurricular Management



- **Minimize problems on trips, at competitions, etc. by using small security deposits.**
  - Prepare them for the reality of a rental security deposit and prevent problems by holding a \$50 check before big trips/competitions.
  - Return the check if they meet all expectations. Deposit it into your activity account if they don't (with an explanation to the parents by phone and/or email).
  - OR consider granting alumni sponsorships *after* the event pending good behavior.
- **Prepare your students for college, careers, and life by paying them to do the work that anyone can do.**
  - Create a career preparation program by creating jobs within your programs.
  - Use local donations to provide scholarships to students based on their performances (using an “exceptional/sufficient/insufficient” evaluation process).
  - Use these students to return graded papers to mailboxes, assist with lesson plans, handle financial records, manage your laboratory/greenhouse/forest/fields/office, promote your program through marketing, update the website, etc.

# Extracurricular Management



- **Treat an extracurricular like a small corporation.**
  - Use a small group of elected officers as your board of directors.
  - Have them hire managers through a standard job interview w/ resumes and cover letters.
  - Pay managers based on their performance using the activity funds.
    - *E.g. Hire a fruit sale manager and pay them on commission.*
    - *They get paid only if they meet 100% of their pre-existing expectations.*
  - Serve as their CEO by assessing the performance of the managers and reporting back to the board on a monthly basis.
- **Ask officers to describe the conditions for removal in case a student fails to perform. Write it down and vote on it.**
  - Use this if a student fails to do their job as the basis for removal.
  - You can even include it as part of their officer application.



# FFA-specific items



- **You're a teacher first, advisor second, everything else third.**
  - Build your program by getting them to want to be in your classes first.
  - Be the teacher "that actually teaches them something" so that you recruit the students who are willing to perform.
  - Use the FFA to engage their passion.
  - Use the classroom and FFA to help them build an SAE that translates into a career.
- **SAEs are not proficiencies.**
  - It is better for a kid to work at McDonalds and gain a sense of independence and pride in their performance than to have a great gold-rated proficiency that has nothing to do with their career intents or understanding of how to perform on the job.
  - SAEs should develop from a student's passion and guide them to their career. Bend the rules if you have to, but make sure your kids are in an SAE because it will benefit their future, not just to fulfill a requirement for FFA or a program.

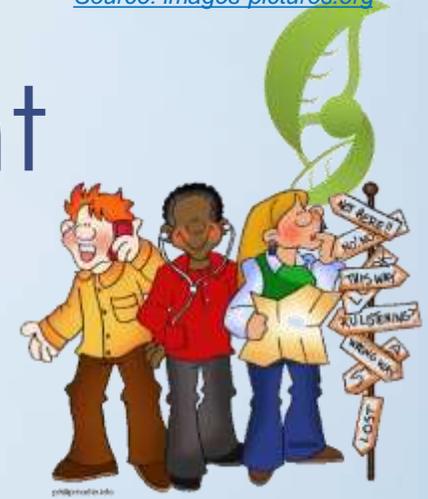
# Parent/Administrator Management Strategies



# Parent/Administrator Management

- **Make every request about the best interests of your students.**

- It should never be about what you want.
- It should always be about how you can best help your students.
- E.g. *“I’m sorry to have to ask for this, but in order for my students to be able to \_\_\_\_\_, I need \_\_\_\_\_.”*



- **Use “Yes” sparingly and never use “Yes” by itself. As often as possible, follow a “Yes” with an “if”, “and”, or “but”.**

- “Yes I *could* chaperone that event BUT that would prevent me from doing X, Y, and Z. Could you see if anyone else can first and then check with me again?”
- “Yes I can serve on that school committee, AND can you serve as a judge at my next speaking competition?” *(They’ll stop asking you for things after a while.)*
- “Yes I can organize that event IF you can provide me with some additional funds for it. Otherwise I am afraid I am not able to do so.”
  - *Be careful! This one requires a lot of tact and finesse!*



# Parent/Administrator Management

- **Always be the one to make the phone ring.**
  - I.e. don't wait for someone to call you. Problems stay minimal when you don't put them off.
- **Eliminate the surprise of a phone call with a courtesy email.**
  - Part of our job is to make unpleasant phone calls.
  - Eliminate the shock by sending an email first ("I just need a second of your time to discuss \_\_\_\_\_. When would be the best time to call?")
  - This also prevents you from putting off a phone call until it's too late.
- **Invite your administrator's into your classroom on what you know will be a good day with plenty of advance notice.**
  - They'll probably count it as your observation.



# Parent/Administrator Management



- **Send a weekly email to your parents and administrators with your lesson plans, deadlines, and FYIs.**
  - You have to write the darn things anyway; write it as if they're meant for the parents and include all deadlines and upcoming assessments. Send it every Friday afternoon or Monday morning.
  - Few things will more appreciated than weekly communication.
  - Make your classroom and instruction as transparent as possible.

To: Kohn Craig

Mr. Kohn,

Thank you for all your communication. For Kyle's first experience within the public school system since kindergarten, I couldn't have asked for a better teacher-- you are

- **Keep a Most-Wanted List.**

- Identify the 10 students who need you the most.
- Contact administrators, guidance, their parents, and anyone you can with your concerns until they make it off your list.



# Parent/Administrator Management



- **Schedule talks with parents, administrators and community members.**
  - Ask them what they think is necessary for your program to improve.
  - Find ways to combine their vision with your vision and ask them for feedback. Build bridges by engaging your stakeholders.
- **Bribe your administrators, secretaries, accountants, custodians, parent volunteers,... well, pretty much anyone you can as often as you can.**
  - Send written thank you's, send flowers, provide small gifts, and do anything you can to show them how important they are to you and how much you appreciate them.

Standards, Teacher  
Effectiveness, PDP's,  
Licensure, Etc.



# Standards, Teacher Effectiveness, PDP's, Licensure, Etc.



- **The only thing you HAVE to do is what is best for your students.**
  - No one is holding a gun to your head – you do what you do because you choose to do it.
  - Make sure that what you do is in the best interests of your students and if it isn't, don't do it.
- **State and national standards are guides to the curriculum, not the curriculum.**
  - A doctor or veterinarian is not limited to the exact instructions of a medication – they are the professional who decides what dosage and type of administration is best.
  - Similarly, you are a professional who must decide how to best prepare your students.
  - Use standards as a guide but don't restrict quality instruction because of them.



# Standards, Teacher Effectiveness, PDP's, Licensure, Etc.



- **Have an email folder set up in advance for evidence collection.**
  - When a parent sends you a thank you email, when an administrator complements you, or if a business owner recognizes your impact on their current employees, file these emails where you can find them for use in a PDP, Educator Effectiveness artifact, etc.
- **Have an file folder set up in advance for evidence collection.**
  - Keep a physical paper file for thank you's, letters of congratulation, printouts of your calendar, copies of exceptional student work, etc.
  - Use this both for evidence as well as a pick-me-up on a bad day.
- **Schedule appointments with yourself for reflection and artifact collection. Write it down and stick with it.**

Having a Life



# Having a Life



- **Quit by 9 PM.**
  - If you can't get it done by 9, it probably doesn't have to get done.
- **Have a late-night and an early-night every week.**
  - Schedule practices, meetings, etc. for your late night.
  - You also deserve a freebie once a week. Use it to recharge mentally.
- **Know the difference between important and urgent.**
  - Most phone calls are urgent but not important.
  - Knowing the direction that your program is going is important but not urgent.
  - Don't let the urgent outcompete the important.
- **Keep a to-do list in your pocket. Review it before leaving.**

# Having a Life



- **Buy nice greeting cards in bulk when they go on sale. Keep them in your desk.**
  - People notice when you remember a birthday, sent a handwritten note after a death, and congratulate them with a card when they have a baby or get married.
  - Be that person who took 30 seconds to put two handwritten sentences in their mailbox. It will never be forgotten.
- **Have a back-up set of clothes, meal, and detergent at school.**
- **Have a stack of \$5 gift cards on hand (Culvers can give you a deal sometimes if you ask).**
- **Use leftover fruit-sale items as unexpected thank you gifts.**

# Having a Life



- **Schedule non-school things for Saturdays.**
  - Commit to them. If you don't schedule it, it won't happen.
  - Go fishing. Exercise. Call your family. Meditate. Grow as a person.
- **Those moments when you have no control can be a great opportunity for change.**
  - I almost totaled my car the week before FFA Week. I prepared my kids and told them that because I was riding with another teacher, I had to leave a 3pm every day.
  - They were prepared to shoulder the responsibility and it has stayed the same ever since.
- **Sincere apologies are one of the most effective ways to strengthen a relationship.**
  - You will have to apologize sometimes. Use it as an opportunity to be a better person and view it as such.

# Parting Thoughts



# Parting Thoughts



- **Your effectiveness as a teacher is not determined by the hours you put in or the to-do list items that you accomplish. It is determined by the lives that you touch and the futures that you impact.**
  - Good teachers do not burn out in a couple years because they know they are too important to the lives of hundreds of people who depend on them.
  - Good teachers know their limitations and know the value of taking care of themselves.
- **Take care of yourself so that you can take care of others.**
  - Students will not remember if you failed to grade an assignment but they will remember the way you made them feel and the impact that you had on their future.
  - A positive influence who stays at school for 9 hours a day is much better than a negative influence that is at school for 18 hours a day.