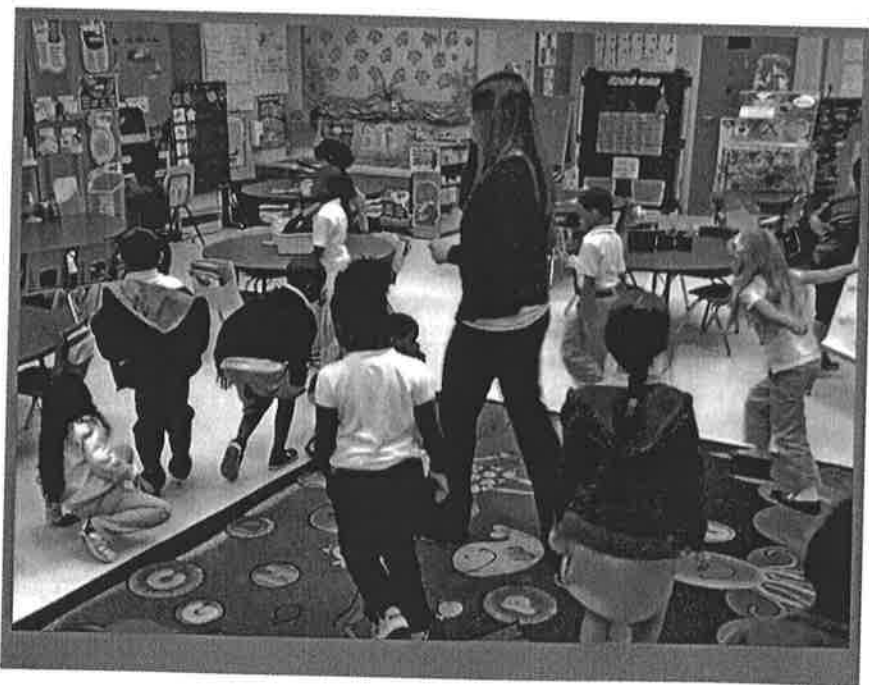


20

THE PROCEDURE

Classroom Transitions

Class time lost by students in chaos can be avoided when students know how to move easily from one activity to the next.



THE SOLUTION

Seamless classroom transitions allow for the uninterrupted flow of learning throughout the school day. Learning time is wasted when students have no direction for ending one task and beginning another. **A transition cue guides students through a defined process so that time is used efficiently in the classroom.**

This procedure provides these opportunities:

1. Students transitioning seamlessly between activities inside and outside of the classroom
2. Learning time used efficiently for classroom transitions
3. Student and teacher preparation of materials

THE BACKGROUND

A transition is a bridge connecting one activity to the next throughout the school day. Transition is difficult for some students to handle because it requires students to do three things at once.

1. **Close** one task.
2. **Prepare** for the next task.
3. **Refocus** on the next task.

When a class of students can make these transitions seamlessly, more time can be spent working and learning, instead of constantly struggling to get back on task.

Refrain from announcing an instant transition.

Announce a transition at least two minutes before it occurs. This is especially important for autistic and ADHD students.

THE PROCEDURE STEPS

The key to a smooth transition is clarity and simplicity of instructions. Keep it short, simple, and easy to do.

1. Plan smooth transitions within the classroom.
2. Prepare lesson materials ahead of time.

1. Plan Smooth Transitions Within the Classroom.
Plan the transition cues you will use in your classroom to move students from one activity to the next.

Transition in Three

When it is time to transition from one lesson to the next or move from one area to the next, announce to the class, "One." Let them know that the time is approaching to move on to the next activity. Announce, "In two minutes, I will say, 'Two, Change.'" This serves as a warning to students that a transition is about to happen.

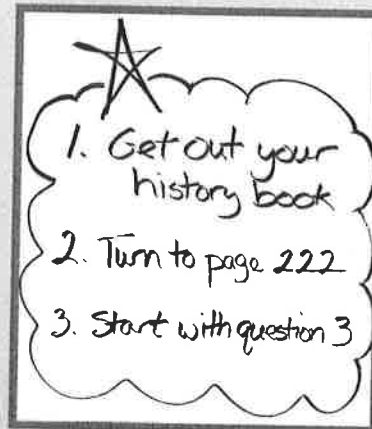
After two minutes, say, "Two, Change. Please put away your work and get ready for the next lesson."

After one minute, say, "Three, Refocus." Give students the direction to begin a new task, like turning to a page in a book, numbering a sheet of paper, or assembling into groups.

In three calm minutes, students are led through the transition process.

Visual learners like to see what is going to happen after the transition takes place. Write on the board the activity that will take place after the transition. Remember, you are asking students to process multiple steps in performing the transition. Help them get to where you

want them to be after the transition takes place by posting what they should be doing at the end of the transition.



When the transition begins, do not talk during the transition time.

Talking distracts the students' ability to switch properly. If directions are constantly being given, then your transition instructions are not short, simple, and easy to do.

Watch carefully, and if someone is not shifting properly, give a firm smile and a hand signal or point to the directions on the board. Help students get to where you want them to be at the end of the transition.

3. Let them know how much time they will have between activities.
4. Provide a visual checklist of steps for students to follow to accomplish the transition successfully.
5. Demonstrate how you would like to see the students transition. Let them know what step you are doing and explain how the steps flow smoothly.

REHEARSE

Ask students to pretend they are working on a class assignment. Tell them your cue for a transition. Verbally pace the steps you've outlined as they do the step. Lead them and correct them through each step.

Ask students for understanding and readiness to transition on their own.

Ask students to pretend they're working on an assignment again and give them the cue for transition. Tell them this time they are to do the transition themselves. Watch and correct students with a hand signal or point to the directions on the board as needed. Do not talk during transition time. Talking distracts the students' ability to switch successfully.

At the end of transition time, thank the students for following the procedure.

REINFORCE

At the first opportunity for the class to do a transition in a real setting, remind the students of the cue and what the procedure is when they hear the cue. Monitor progress and thank students as they follow the transition procedure.

A thank you at the end of every transition time reminds students you are aware of what they are doing and how they are doing it.

Transitions for Preschoolers

Transitions guide children gently through the day and help children move smoothly from one area of the room to another.

Teach the students your transition cues:

- Flash the lights.
- Clap your hands.
- Play music or sing a song.

Most importantly, move to the area where you would like the children to gather and begin the task or talk quietly. The children will quickly come to where you are to see what you are doing.

Singing Jingles

I always greet my students and others who pass by in the hall as they come into class. It sets the tone for the period and builds positive relationships.

I sing jingles to my students (juniors and seniors) as transitions to new activities. They soon learn the jingles and sing with me. They love singing the songs, which simultaneously segue quickly from one activity to another, because they know the routines. It makes transitions easy, simple, and fun.

I am completing my 40th year of teaching in June (2010) and have totally enjoyed it because I know I am an effective teacher!

Dave Allen ■ Mt. Shasta, California



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Learn how to keep materials organized to ease the confusion experienced during many transition times.

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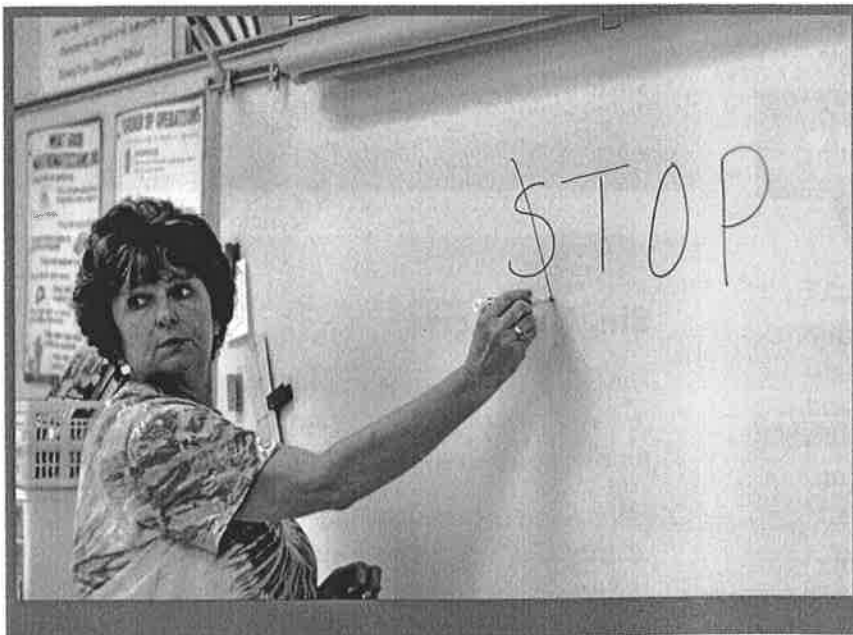
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21

THE PROCEDURE

Keeping Students On Task

Establishing a clear procedure for over-active engagement in activities reminds students to adjust their activities to established classroom norms if their actions are unacceptable.



THE SOLUTION

Some activities prompt students to become overly exuberant and unable to manage their actions while performing the work. **The STOP strategy is very effective for returning the classroom atmosphere to one that's suitable for learning.**

This procedure provides these opportunities:

1. Eliminates noisy, off-task class behavior
2. Returns the classroom to an appropriate learning atmosphere

THE BACKGROUND

Students can become overly excited about exploratory or hands-on activities and have trouble following classroom procedures. Sometimes, the day before a school holiday or a special event triggers high-spirited, over-energized student actions. Whether students are being loud and disruptive, or just silly and off task, you need a quick signal to let them know their actions are inappropriate, and they need to get back to work.

THE PROCEDURE STEPS

This technique is only effective when the majority of students are engaged in off-task behaviors, not with individuals who are disrupting the rest of the class.

Teach this procedure as needed, not in advance. Teaching this procedure in advance sends the message you expect students to be noisy or to go off task.

To solve this problem, write the word STOP on the board in large block letters. Each time the class engages in off-task behavior, draw a line through one letter. If you have to mark out all four letters, stop the activity and change to something more structured.



Mark out a letter to signal to the class they need to STOP their current actions and refocus on the activity at hand.

Have a back-up activity ready at all times. The activity is one the students do on their own while they recompose themselves. A back-up activity could be

- completing a worksheet,
- reading in their choice of books, or
- writing in their journals.

You may never have to deploy your back-up plan, but you should have one ready.

TEACH

1. Introduce the STOP strategy only as a last resort. If students become noisy and stray off task, first use the established quiet signal to get their attention. (See Procedure 13.) Remind them it is important to work quietly and to stay on task.
2. If students continue to stray off task, write the word STOP on the board and explain to the students you will mark out one letter of the word each time the class is engaged in noisy or off-task behavior. Ask students to help each other keep the noise level in check.
3. Tell them if all of the letters are marked out, you will stop the activity and continue with a quiet learning activity. There is no need to explain the back-up activity, just be sure you have one ready!
4. Each time the class is too noisy or off task, use the established quiet signal to get students' attention. Deliberately mark out one letter from the word STOP, and gently but firmly announce, "Class, you just lost a letter." There is no need for you to raise your voice or to explain why a letter has been erased—the students know the reason.
5. When only the final P of STOP remains, remind the class that they have one last chance to prove their ability to stay on task. Do not hesitate to mark out that last letter. The most ineffective thing you can do is repeatedly threaten to mark out the letter and not do it.

6. If students improve their behavior, circulate in the classroom and thank them for improving and leave the remaining letters on the board.
7. If the last P is marked out, deploy the back-up activity. Emphasize that the class needs to work in silence and that whatever work was not completed in class that day is to be completed as homework.
8. Refrain from lecturing the class. If you feel something must be said, a simple, "The noise level and your actions for this activity were not appropriate. Maybe we can try it tomorrow," will suffice.

REHEARSE

Tell students there is no rehearsal for the STOP procedure. This procedure happens in real time and will only be used if the noise level or activity level

in the classroom needs to be refocused on learning. Anytime they see STOP on the board is an indication that their actions are not appropriate for the learning activity.

REINFORCE

The next day, attempt the activity again. Expect to see a big improvement in the students' ability to stay on task and keep their noise levels down.

You will find that implementing this procedure in its entirety just once ensures the final P will never be marked out again. The loss of hands-on activity time—to be replaced by individual work and homework—is too high a cost for most students.

THIS IS A
PROFANITY
FREE
ZONE



Tone Is the Key

Individual outbursts can be just as disruptive to a class as groups not focused on a task. At times, all it takes is a single word—by the student—to change the learning atmosphere in the classroom. Help students control a sudden slip of the tongue and make it a learning opportunity.

Profanity-laced conversations can deflate a carefully constructed learning environment. Whether said intentionally or said in error, profanity is not suitable language to use in the classroom.

Janene Palumbo teaches 7th- and 8th-grade English in an urban school district. She knew the conditions would be challenging, and she knew that she would encounter

profanity on a rather frequent basis. She thought about how she could de-escalate the situation when she heard the profanity. Even though many students, because of their cultural upbringing, need to "save face" when confronted by the teacher, she knew she could not allow profanity in her classroom. She was proactive, not reactive, to the problem she knew would surface in her classroom.

Special Guideline

This classroom is a

“Profanity Free Zone.”

That means that there will be no cussing, for ANY reason.

Respected scholars use academic language to accurately describe what they are thinking.



Janene uses the text on these PowerPoint slides to teach the no profanity procedure to her students.

Janene explains to her students that she expects academic language in class at all times. However, she tells them she understands that they have been out with their friends all summer and may not be accustomed to using academic language every day.

She also understands that many times, cursing is a habit, and “you may not even realize you are doing it.” The use of the word “understands” helps Janene come across as empathic to their habit and not as someone lecturing or sanctimonious.

She then shows them a picture of her fiancée and explains that he, too, struggles with profanity (which he really does!). She assures them he is trying to fix his problem, but explains that bad habits are hard to break. Although her fiancée is an intelligent person, some people may not believe it when they hear him swearing.

With that as an introduction—the part about the fiancée makes it very real and personal—Janene explains the procedure to the class.

Janene says, “If I hear you swearing, I will say, ‘Language.’” She says this in a neutral tone and says that the neutral tone is the key to the effectiveness of this procedure.

Profanity Procedure

1. Teacher will remind you of our **“Profanity Free Zone”** by saying **“Language.”**
2. Student will respond by apologizing and restating what they said in academic language.
3. Student will say, **“Sorry. What I meant to say is . . .”**



Try saying “language” in several tones. It’s amazing how effective it is when said in a neutral and non-judgmental tone.

Janene tells them that they are not in trouble when she says “Language.” But, she expects them to follow the procedure and correct themselves.

To correct the swearing, the student says, “Sorry: What I meant to say is . . .” This teaches the use of academic language when the students substitute the correct words.

Be vigilant the first few weeks about consistently enforcing this procedure. Every time profanity is heard, even if it is whispered, say, “Language.”

Janene says, “It Works! The students are so responsive to the procedure. They immediately apologize and restate what they meant to say. In fact, students often censor their own language before I even say ‘Language’ to them. Many have broken the habit altogether and have not used profanity after the first few weeks. I now hear students say ‘Language’ to each other!”

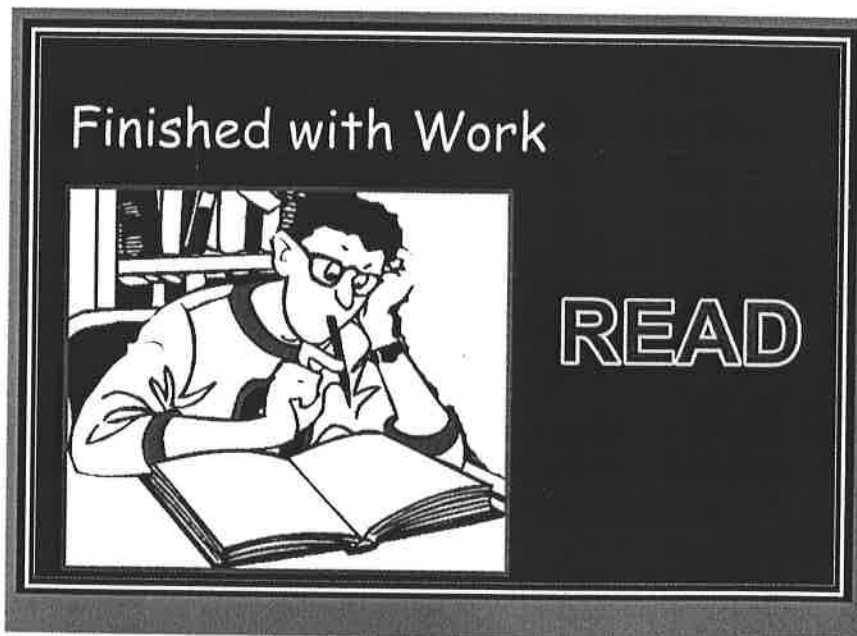
The most important part of this procedure is for the tone of voice to remain neutral and non-judgmental.

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THE PROCEDURE

Finishing Work Early

Help students get the most out of their learning time with a list of things to do should they complete their work before the rest of the class.



THE SOLUTION

When students finish their work early and have nothing to do, productive class time is wasted. The likelihood of misbehavior increases. While Silent Reading is used by many teachers to fill this time, there are other ways to engage students in learning while they wait for classmates to complete an assignment.

This procedure resolves these issues:

1. Students not working when they are done with their assignments
2. Ineffective use of time in the classroom
3. Redirecting students who are off task
4. Avoiding the question from a student, "I'm done. What do I do now?"

THE BACKGROUND

The individual who is working is learning. If students are off task while waiting for the next assignment, or waiting for other students to finish the current assignment, the teacher is usually the one working—running around the classroom trying to keep students busy.

A Start Off and Finish Off chart will keep early finishers working while the rest of the class completes the assignment. Your time is free to continue teaching rather than finding work to keep students busy.

Start Off	Finish Off
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do your assignment. 2. Check your work. 3. Turn it in. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Check your unfinished file. 2. Work on writing in your folder. 3. Choose a free time activity from the shelf. 4. Read your chapter book.

The Start Off and Finish Off keeps students on task and learning at all times.

THE PROCEDURE STEPS

Prepare a T-chart that will be large enough for posting in the classroom. Label one side Start Off and the other side Finish Off.

In the Start Off column, list a number of activities or assignments for students to do when they finish their work. Number them to indicate the priority in getting the tasks done.

In the Finish Off column, give a numbered or bulleted list of activities or assignments. Students can choose what they wish to do from the list once they finish all the tasks in the Start Off column.

Post the chart in the classroom.

TEACH

1. Show students the Start Off and Finish Off chart and explain each column.
2. Point out that the numbered assignments in the Start Off column must be done in sequential order.
3. Explain that students may choose from any of the other tasks in the Finish Off column once they have completed all the tasks in the Start Off column.
4. Explain that students can only work on the tasks on the Start Off and Finish Off charts when they have finished their assigned class work and only while they're waiting for others to finish.
5. Tell students the lists will not always be the same. Some items will be added and some will be taken away as the school year progresses. Let the students know you'll point out changes as they are made.

REHEARSE

Once the students have moved on to their independent practice, remind the class that as they finish, they should look at the Start Off and Finish Off chart.

Watch as students complete their work and move on to their Start Off assignments. Acknowledge students who follow the procedure correctly and remain on task.

If a student is done, but is not following the procedure, catch the student's attention, smile, and point to the chart. Nod with approval as the student follows your request.

REINFORCE

At the end of the assignment time, and before moving on to the next lesson, acknowledge the students for using their time effectively. Let them know that the Start Off and Finish Off chart will be posted every day, and will remain posted for their reference as they finish their work.

What's in a Name?

The Start Off/Finish Off chart is adaptable to any grade level or subject taught. Give the categories a name that relates to the personality of your classroom.

Alternate Names for		Type of Classroom
Start Off	Finish Off	
A	Z	For primary grades
I	2	
Mr. B's Choice	Your Choice	
P ¹ Priority 1	P ² Priority 2	For a Math class
Chapter 1	Chapter 2	For a Literature class
Appetizers	Desserts	For a Home Arts class
Touchdown	Extra Point	For a PE class
Uno	Dos	For a Spanish class
Salutation	Signature	For a Writing class
Core	Crust	For a Science class

No Chaos

I had a preservice teacher observing my classroom. I welcomed him and encouraged him to monitor the students, watch the day's events, and help with the lab activities of the day.

The following day I asked him, 'So, what do you think of this whole business of becoming a teacher?'

I was not prepared for his response.

He calmly replied, 'There isn't the stress involved with teaching like I thought there would be.'

I asked what he was expecting to see in the classroom.

'I expected there to be more conflict, argument, and chaos. It's what I remember when I went to middle school, and I expected to see it here. There just weren't any of those things in your classroom.'

I shared with him that all of the teachers teach classroom procedures the first week of the school year, and I tell the students everything they need to know, right down to the dreaded—what to do if you think you'll be sick in the middle of class. Nothing is left to chance. I have a plan and a procedure for everything that happens in this classroom.

The students know exactly what to do when they walk into my classroom. There is no chaos because they KNOW the procedures. There is consistency, not only in this classroom, but it is repeated in every classroom here at Sisseton Middle School.

Tammy Meyer ■ Sisseton, South Dakota



Creating a Learning Zone

Fifth-grade teacher **Elmo Sanchez** knows about whining and yelling. His first year of teaching was filled with it. Elmo's students spoke throughout the class period. They were disruptive, whined, and lacked direction. Elmo found himself yelling in response.

That entire first year, **Elmo** was frustrated. He was unhappy in his profession, and it affected his family life. During the summer, Elmo attended a workshop sponsored by the Miami-Dade school district where he heard the Wongs talk about classroom management. It was his "light bulb" moment. Elmo began to visualize how he could improve his classroom management.

It took him about a month to create a PowerPoint presentation (in Spanish, too) that conveyed his new classroom policies and procedures. **Elmo created a Learning Zone—a place where his own students could soar, a place free from the distractions of whining and yelling.**

In the new school year, he warmly greeted each one at the door. "Welcome to our class," he said as he shook each student's hand. "I'm glad you are here."

When the students entered the classroom, there was an opening assignment, and the students immediately began to work. When Elmo entered the class, his students were busy working.

He introduced his students to the procedures that would create their classroom learning zone. His students, many who are ESL students, had absolutely no problems understanding what was expected of them in his class. They learned how to ask permission to use the restroom, what to put at the top of papers they turn in, what to do when they finish an in-class assignment early, and how to appropriately treat their fellow classmates.

When the bell rang at the end of the day, Elmo's students remained in their seats for the teacher to dismiss them, not the bell. They all left with smiles. Elmo's smile was pretty big, too!

There's no more whining, no talking back, no shouting in Elmo's classroom. Parents tell him that their kids complain about missing school when they are sick. Elmo just smiles. He knows that he has created a strong learning zone based on classroom management strategies that enable him to create calm where there was once chaos. He is happy; his family is happy; and his students are happy, too.

23

THE PROCEDURE

Missing Assignment Slip

With a responsibility card, students become accountable for reporting their reasons for missing work, and you receive documentation to keep on file for the missing work.

Student Responsibility Card

For students who do not have the assigned homework

Fill it out.
Sign and date it.
Turn it in with the homework papers.

Student Responsibility Report

Date: _____ Printed Name: _____ Subject: _____

Completing your homework or assignment is your responsibility as a student.

Missing Assignment: _____

I do not have my homework today because:

- I did the assigned homework, but I did not bring it to class.
- I chose not to do my homework.
- I forgot to do my homework.
- I did not have the appropriate materials at home.
- Other reason is _____

Explanation of checked item above (provide detailed explanation).

Signature: _____

THE SOLUTION

A responsibility card keeps track of excuses for missing student work and dramatically improves a student's homework turn-in rate. It provides excellent documentation at Parent-Teacher conferences because you do not have to scramble to explain why a student received a failing score on an assignment.

This procedure solves these problems:

1. Lack of documentation for missing assignments
2. Lack of responsibility for missing assignments

THE BACKGROUND

It is impossible to remember why students don't have their assignments in class, unless you have a tracking tool to assist you. A student responsibility card is a lifesaver for gathering data from students and provides documentation for underperformance.

With a form for students to complete, teachers can continue their routines without interruption because the students are responsible for recording the details on the card.

The student responsibility card as a "Pink Slip" has gained some notoriety in teaching circles because **Chelonnda Seroyer** shares it when she speaks and when people look at the free DVD, "Using THE FIRST DAYS OF SCHOOL," found in the back of *The First Days of School*.

The Pink Slip came about when a veteran teacher was cleaning out her supply cabinet and offered a package of pink copy paper to Chelonnda. Because it was near the end of her first year of teaching with that looming prospect of being pink-slipped, the pack of pink paper was a vivid reminder of what could happen to her.

Fortunately, those thoughts took a more positive outlook and soon she birthed the "Pink Slip."

As Chelonnda says,

*I initially 'stole' this procedure from another teacher, **Karla Henson** of Liberty Middle School in the Madison City School District. Eventually, I modified it and adapted it so that it fit the specific needs of my classroom. I called the adapted version the 'Pink Slip.'*

This has been an extremely helpful procedure because it has provided me with valuable documentation, it encourages the students to take responsibility for their work, and it also allows the students to share valuable information with me that I might not know.

When I go to a meeting and attempt to explain why a student has a zero for an assignment, it makes me feel organized, competent, and professional when I am able to provide documentation for each missing assignment. This takes the guess work out of why students miss assignments.

I also think that it is important for students to be able to explain why they do not have their assignments. This gives them a voice, and it lets them know that I am genuinely concerned about what is going on with them.

One of the options on the form allows them to admit that they chose not to do the assignment. I let them know that we all make conscious choices each day. When they make a choice not to do their homework, they must accept responsibility for that choice.

I have found that students truly appreciate this gesture and are generally very receptive.

On the other hand, I have also found that they will do even a small portion of the assignment, just so they won't have to fill out a form. This works well because anything is better than a zero in the grade book!

THE PROCEDURE STEPS

The Pink Slip is taught to students on the first day homework is assigned. The procedure is applied if the student comes to class the next day without the homework assignment.



21 •

Watch Chelonnda Seroyer tell how the Pink Slip saved her life and a grandmother's life.

Print the Pink Slip on pink-colored paper. Include prompts and fill-in blanks for these things:

- Date
- Name
- Class Section
- Missing Assignment
- Checkboxes for the student to indicate the reason for not doing the homework:
 - I did the assigned homework, but I did not bring it to class.
 - I chose not to do my homework.
 - I forgot to do my homework.
 - I did not have the appropriate materials at home.
 - Other—Please explain below. (provide space)
- A student signature line
- A parent/guardian signature line (optional)

TEACH

1. Introduce the Pink Slip to students.
2. Distribute a Pink Slip to each student to have in hand while you explain how it will be used and when it will be issued.
3. Tell students that when they choose not to do a homework assignment, they are to complete a Pink Slip and submit it to you when homework is collected.
4. Let them know you record an “M” (for missing) for the student’s missing assignment, with the understanding and encouragement to complete the work and replace the “M” with an appropriate grade.
5. Emphasize to students that there is no penalty for filling in a Pink Slip—other than the loss of credit for the missed homework assignment.
6. Ensure students understand that completing their homework is their responsibility. You will not punish students if they do not complete their homework.
7. Tell them you will keep the Pink Slips on file while they are students in your classroom. These will be produced during Parent-Teacher conferences if there is a pattern of missed homework assignments.

Pink Slip Variations

A Pink Slip is a form of documentation; it is not a form of discipline. With a multitude of students, this slip is essential for establishing patterns for missed work in a non-judgemental way.

- If a student has been Pink-Slipped, but later turns in the missing assignment in a timely manner, you may choose to award the student partial credit for the assignment.
- You may send the Pink Slip home for a parent to review and sign.
- If a student refuses to complete the Pink Slip, complete the form with the student’s name, date, and assignment that is missing. Note on the Pink Slip that the student refused to complete the form. Keep this as documentation for the incomplete assignment.

Date: _____
 Printed Name: _____
 Class Section: _____

You've been *Pink-Slipped!*

Completing your homework or assignment is your *responsibility* as a student.

Missing Assignment: _____

I do not have my homework today because:

- I did the assigned homework, but I did not bring it to class.
 I chose not to do my homework.
 I forgot to do my homework.
 I did not have the appropriate materials at home.
 Other—please explain below.

Signature _____

A Pink Slip gives students the opportunity to explain why they chose not to do their homework.

REHEARSE

Model how a Pink Slip will be issued. When a student does not have a homework assignment, you will do the following:

- Place a Pink Slip on the student's desk.
- Ask the student to complete the form and turn it in with the rest of their homework.
- Record an "M" to document the student's missing assignment.
- File the Pink Slip as documentation.

Ask students to practice completing the Pink Slip as if they have not done their homework.

Select Pink Slips to read aloud and demonstrate to the class that the student's form was done correctly.

Collect the Pink Slips as you would homework.

Check them for accuracy and conduct one-on-one conferences with those students who need additional direction in completing the form.

REINFORCE

Walk students through the procedure steps for the Pink Slip the next morning. When it is time to check or collect homework, ask the class if anyone needs a Pink Slip for not completing their homework. Distribute a Pink Slip to those who need one. Allow an extra minute to complete the form before the homework is collected. If time permits, check the forms for accuracy.

Why Not a Zero

Assigning a zero to work requires an enormous amount of effort to counteract such a low grade.

Imagine grading on a percentage scale from zero to 100 with A = 90%, B = 80%, C = 70%, D = 60%, and F = 50%. In a 100-point scale, there is typically a 10-point break between the passing grades, whereas there is a 60-point spread between a zero and barely passing, a D or 60%. Assigning zeros as grades is illogical and mathematically incomprehensible.

If a student receives a zero and then on the next assignment or test the student scores a perfect 100, that only averages out to 50%, still a failing grade.

It would take a student two perfect 100% scores to reach a C and four perfect 100% scores to climb up to an A.

Rather than a zero, any letter or symbol would work. If you feel the need to record a number, consider 50%. The climb back up to a passing grade is more reasonable for students to accomplish.



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Read Thomas Guskey's article, "O Alternative" for other scoring options.

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THE PROCEDURE

Daily Closing Message

At the end of the school day, review the events that occurred and the learning that took place with a Daily Closing Message.

Class Recap

These are some of the things we did today, Wednesday, December 12, 2012.

In Reading, we

1. started reading *2030: A Day in the Life of Tomorrow's Kid*.
2. looked for common nouns and the adjectives that made them interesting: plasticized blocks, smart trampoline, and magnetized hovering.

In Math, we learned how multiplication and division are related.

For Writing, we worked on using adjectives to improve our writing.

Tonight for homework, please

1. read the next 10 pages in our *2030* book.

THE SOLUTION

A school day recap eliminates the scenario, whereby students go home and claim they did nothing in school that day. This technique allows you to share with students and parents the daily activities, lessons, and homework in a matter of minutes at the end of each day.

This procedure provides these opportunities:

1. Reviewing the day's events with students
2. Reminding students of upcoming events and homework
3. Conveying to the parent the activities of the school day
4. Opening a line of communication for the parent and child

THE BACKGROUND

Every school day is packed with activities and lessons, so that when a child goes home and tells a parent that nothing happened all day, the teacher can establish the facts.

Parent: *What did you do in school today?*

Child: *Nothing!*

A Daily Closing Message is a half-page memo that is prepared by the teacher during the school day and then read aloud in class before dismissal. **It is a quick way to review the day's lessons and activities, give reminders about upcoming events, and reinforce the homework for the evening.** It is also a valuable communication tool between the school and home.

The Daily Closing Message is kept as brief as your time permits. Only the highlights of the day are shared. Create a template so that preparing the Daily Closing Message each day is a simple task.

This is the text from one of Sarah Jondahl's Daily Closing Messages.

Daily Closing Message
January 15

These are some of the things we did today:

This morning, we held our reading group sessions.

1. We read a new story and learned new vocabulary words.
2. We also learned about adjectives. We know that an adjective is a word that describes a noun.
3. Continue to read at home with your parents.
4. Tonight, as you read your book, look for all of the adjectives in the story.

In math, we continued to work on our multiplication tables.

1. Today, we focused on division.
2. We played division games in small groups.
3. Continue to practice all of your math facts at home with flash cards.

We are learning how to write paragraphs.

1. Today, we worked on writing a topic sentence, followed by details that will support it.
2. Of course, we can't forget that every paragraph needs an ending sentence.
3. We know that a paragraph needs to stay on one subject.
4. You can practice writing paragraphs at home.

This is your homework tonight:

1. Please do the math page about division and multiplication.
2. Also, work on the page about adjectives.
3. Study your spelling words and don't forget to read with a parent.

Have a great rest of the day!

THE PROCEDURE STEPS

Create a template for your Daily Closing Message. This will make the process go quickly each day. Adapt a format to suit your needs.

Daily Closing Message

Date

These are some of the the things we did today:

In Reading, we

In Math, we

For Writing, we worked on

Tonight for homework, please do

Don't forget to

I'll see you tomorrow!

Class Recap

Date

Today, in **(Subject)**, we

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Homework for tonight is

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

A project due soon is

I'll see you tomorrow!

Using a template for a Daily Closing Message allows you to fill in the blanks throughout the class period or school day.

TEACH

1. At the end of the first day of school, give a copy of the Daily Closing Message to every student. Explain that the Daily Closing Message will be read every day.
2. Model the correct procedure for reading the Daily Closing Message. Tell the class that different students will be selected to read the message. Everyone must follow along, so they are able to read the message at home.
3. Once the Daily Closing Message has been read aloud, instruct students to place it with their materials to take home. Tell them it is their daily responsibility to read the Daily Closing Message to a parent when they get home.
4. Tell students that in your letter to their parents, you shared that a Daily Closing Message would go home each day. Thus, students can expect their parents to ask for this slip of paper every day.

REHEARSE

Select a few students to read the Daily Closing Message aloud after you have read it. Explain that as their classmates read, everyone should follow along.

Thank the students who read the Daily Closing Message and for showing the class how to do the procedure correctly.

Remind students to place the Daily Closing Message with their take-home materials and to share it with a parent when they get home.

REINFORCE

If students are not following along as the Daily Closing Message is read aloud, remind them by asking, "What is the procedure for the Daily Closing Message?"

Check their understanding of your expectation for how the procedure is to be done.

Rehearse the procedure again with one or more of the students until the Daily Closing Message procedure is demonstrated correctly.

In your first communication to the home after the start of the school year, remind parents that the Daily Closing Message has been going home with their child each day.



Communication on a Weekly Basis

Marco Campos is an elementary teacher in the Houston Independent School District where 99 percent of the students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, 85 percent live in government-supported housing, and 42 percent are considered "at-risk." Yet, in past years, 100 percent of his students have passed the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills Test in Math. How is this done?

Marco introduces his students to his classroom procedures beginning on the first day of school. He tells his class that the procedures are for their benefit. "If you follow our procedures, school will be less confusing for you."

One of his procedures is the **Homework Conduct Control Sheet**. He devised it to maintain involvement with the adults who are at home and responsible for the students. Each week the students take home a task list that they are asked to work on with their parents or guardians. The task list includes their daily home learning in reading, Spanish, math, and English.

Their daily home learning reinforces what the students have learned in class that day. When they have finished working together, the parents or guardians must sign the task list. The Homework Conduct Control Sheet is also used as a vehicle for two-way communication between

Marco and the adults. Marco provides daily feedback on classroom conduct. In return, the adults at home can easily communicate with Marco.

Marco was asked to participate in Project Aspire—a study of highly effective teachers sponsored by the school district. The teachers were brought together to share their effective teaching methods. At first, Marco was awed by what he called the real experts. But, he soon realized that every teacher there had several things in common. Every single teacher was a motivator. Each of them understood the importance of building solid relationships with their students and the home. Every single teacher agreed that the most important ingredients for teaching success are motivation, perseverance, compassion, and procedures!

In Marco's words, "To be an effective teacher you must make a conscious decision to be positive and to set high expectations—for your students and yourself."