

# DISCIPLINE TIPS

## Ten Great Ways to Keep Students Engaged

by Ronald Morrish

Students who are engaged in learning are not misbehaving. Your ability to keep students productively engaged will determine much of your success in the teaching profession. Here are ten ways to keep your students engaged in learning.

### 1. Infect your students.

No, not with a virus—with your enthusiasm. It's always been said that a teacher must be like an actor on the stage. It's actually a very basic rule: *No student gets excited about learning something that the teacher is not excited about teaching.* For every lesson, bring your passion for teaching. It's infectious and it gives the students their passion for learning.

### 2. Keep your voice on the lesson.

When you interrupt your lesson to comment on student behaviour, all the other students lose their focus and go off task. Teachers who use “best practice” techniques use their voice to keep a lesson flowing and ensure everyone stays engaged. For behaviour, they use mostly non-verbal techniques such as prompts and cues, eye contact and proximity. When they use their voice, it's for questioning, not scolding. In effective classrooms, learning is the focus, not behaviour.

### 3. “Wrap” your topics.

Many topics in the curriculum are boring—but that doesn't mean the lesson has to be boring. The trick is to wrap up the lesson in something that makes it engaging. Don't tell your students that today's topic is the format of a formal business letter (yawn). Tell them that the lesson is about writing to the city's mayor and inviting the mayor to visit the school. Designing a French café is far more exciting than “now we're doing lesson 46 on page 93,” even though the learning may be exactly the same. There's always a way to make a topic interesting and that's why great teaching is an art.

### 4. Question everyone.

Some teachers were taught to only interact with students who raise their hands. This tech-

nique is part of maintaining orderly control of the learning environment. The problem is that some students never raise their hands. They just sit there completely detached from everything that is going on. That's why best practice teachers question every student in the classroom, not just the ones with their hands up—and they are particularly quick to ask questions of those who start talking to their neighbours or looking out the window.

### 5. Variety is the spice of life—and lessons.

It's actually okay to do a lecture-style lesson every so often. Every teacher does. But if you teach that way all the time, the students will be asleep. So mix it up. Get the students out of their seats measuring, building, researching, interviewing, debating. Use all the different modalities—kinaesthetic, oral, visual, tactile, etc. Interchange individual work and group work. Change the pacing of your lessons.

### 6. Connect lessons to real life experiences and student interests.

It's one thing to read about climbing Mount Everest; it's another thing to Skype someone who's actually accomplished the feat. Similarly, arithmetic becomes more meaningful when the students are calculating the costs of an upcoming field trip. When lessons are meaningful and relevant, the increase in student engagement is dramatic.

### 7. Use technology as an everyday teaching tool.

Today's students have never known a world without electronic wizardry. To them, texting a friend is as natural as getting a drink of water. There's no point arguing about whether technology is good or bad for education. Like it or not, it's part of the real world. Whenever appropriate, weave it into your lessons. Use it as an everyday tool, not as a special privilege.

### 8. Assignment “menus.”

Different people learn in different ways. That's why differentiated instruction is so impor-

tant, but it doesn't just apply to the way lessons are presented. When possible, give students a variety of ways to demonstrate that they have learned the material. One student may decide to do a multi-page written assignment. Others could decide to work as a group and produce a multimedia presentation. And someone else could take on the role of a reporter and do interviews combined with the writing of a mock newspaper column. Students are far more likely to be engaged when they are given some choice when it comes to assignments.

### 9. Like the actors say, “What's my motivation?”

Some students are motivated by marks. Others aren't. That's why best practice teachers weave various types of motivation into their lessons. Challenges, competitions, beat the clock, recognition, rewards and special incentives are all part of the mix. Into every lesson, add a spoonful of motivation and your results will be improved dramatically.

### 10. Model the engagement you want from the students.

If you disengage from the lesson to do another task, the students will do likewise. When students are working on an assignment, move around the room, ask and answer questions, check work, and redirect those who are losing their focus. Be available. If you sit at your desk to mark the work from the previous class, you may find yourself getting annoyed with your present class.

Ronald Morrish is an educational consultant and speaker from Fonthill, Ontario. He has written two books, *Secrets of Discipline: 12 Keys for Raising Responsible Children*, and, *With All Due Respect: Keys for Building Effective School Discipline*. For more information, visit his web site at [www.realdiscipline.com](http://www.realdiscipline.com) or contact him at [ronaldmorrish@bell.net](mailto:ronaldmorrish@bell.net).



# ClassRoom Resources

## PACIFIC EDGE PUBLISHING

REPRODUCIBLE WORKSHEETS • EASY, SAFE ONLINE ORDERING • DOWNLOAD FAST AND SAVE UP TO 70%

### Life Skills

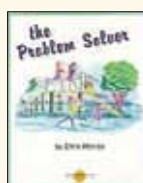


#### Names Will Never Hurt Me

Bully Proofing for Children

by Beverly Brookman  
Download for \$4.99 (REG. \$16.95) 86 pp, gr K–8

This timely resource addresses the bullying issue and offers a comprehensive unit to help teachers “bully proof” their students and create a climate in which bullying is simply not OK.



#### the Problem Solver

Ways to Solve Problems Without Fighting

by Chris Alexiou  
Download for \$2.99 (REG. \$14.95) 66 pp, gr K–5

The 10 short stories in this resource are intended to teach social skills through discussion of situations that are familiar to students.



#### MindWorks—The Communications Course

by Julie Thomas  
Download for \$9.99 (REG. \$29.95)  
210 pp, teacher’s resource for gr 5–9

A program designed to help intermediate/middle school students learn and practise valuable communication skills.



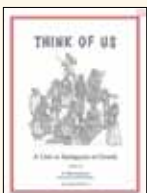
#### Foster Care Resource Guide

by Kim Lewis  
Download for \$2.99 (REG. \$9.95) 32 pp, gr K–12

Written by a teacher and former foster mother, this resource provides reference information to assist teachers dealing with children who are in foster care.

Awarded the “Ontario Teacher’s Federation Writer’s Award”

### Social Studies



#### Think of Us

by Erika McCarthy  
Download for \$2.99 (REG. \$18.95) 70 pp, gr 4–8

This resource uses the stories of real children to teach students about immigration in Canada, to fight racism, and to celebrate how similar we all really are.

Recipient of the The Roy C.Hill Award for Innovations in Curriculum from the O.E.C.T.A.

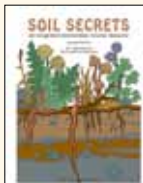


#### Medieval Times

by Teresa Eveleigh and Dawna Blas  
Download for \$2.99 (REG. \$12.95) 90 pp, gr 1–6

The authors (adaptive behaviour and multi-level classroom teachers) created this unit to span curriculum areas and to accommodate different age, interest and ability levels in the classroom. Level 1 for grades 1–3, Level 2 for grades 4–6.

### Science



#### Soil Secrets

B.C. Agriculture in the Classroom Foundation  
Download for \$4.99 (REG. \$18.95) 150 pp, coil, gr 4–8

You won't believe how many fun and fascinating things you and your students can do in a study of soils until you check out this resource.



#### Beans and Their Buddies

B.C. Agriculture in the Classroom Foundation  
Download for \$4.99 (REG. \$15.95)  
134 pp, b/w illust, gr 1–4

Twenty activities for a theme study of seeds, extending the material into all areas of the curriculum.



#### Magnetic and Charged Materials

by Bill Cowan  
Download for \$2.99 (REG. \$9.95) 48 pp, gr 3–5

Over 20 individual student activities and 12 hands-on experiments which provide students with opportunities to discover facts about magnetism and static electricity.

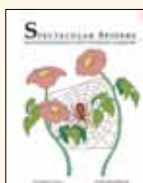
Awarded the “Ontario Teacher’s Federation Writer’s Award”



#### Fruits and Veggies

Download for \$ .99 (REG. \$8.95)  
40 pp, b/w illust., gr 1–3

Perfect for research and independent projects. Includes fact sheets containing information about twenty common Canadian fruits and vegetables, activity ideas and beautiful b/w drawings.



#### Spectacular Spiders

by Margriet Ruurs  
REG. \$9.95 (Download for \$2.99) 50 pp, gr 1–3

Factual information about spiders written for primary researchers, activity ideas for across the curriculum, blackline masters, and evaluation forms are all included.



#### Goofy Groundhogs

by Deborah L. Gutosky  
Download for \$2.99 (REG. \$9.95) 40 pp, gr K–3

Get ready for Groundhog Day! Teacher-friendly unit: easy-to-learn songs, a play, and Language Arts, Math, Writing, Science, Art and Reading activities.



#### British Columbia

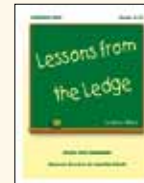
Its Land Mineral and Water Resources  
\$18.95, 108 pp, coil, b/w, gr 5–8

Designed for students in BC to learn about their province, particularly about the resources that shape the lives of people who live here.

Recommended for Grade 5 Science and Social Studies by the BC Ministry of Education.

Teacher’s Guide — Download for \$19.99 (REG. \$49.95) 150 pp

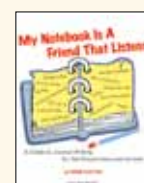
### Language Arts



#### Lessons from the Ledge

by Robyn Whyte  
Download for \$2.99 (REG. \$11.95) 60 pp, gr 4–10

An easy to use set of lesson plans for teaching creative writing.

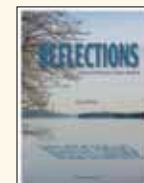


#### My Notebook Is A Friend That Listens

A Guide to Journal Writing

by Nomi Kaston  
Download for \$9.99 (REG. \$18.95) 110 pp, gr 4–8

A unique collection of writing activities that provide teachers and students with a range of personal journal writing opportunities.



#### Reflections

Personal Writing for Senior Students

by Don McNair  
Download for \$9.99 (REG. \$19.95) 130 pp, gr 8–12

Designed primarily to facilitate personal writing in secondary school classrooms. But as the title implies, this resource is not only about writing—it is about thinking, pondering, reminiscing and reflecting.



#### Word Wiz

by Evelyn Steinberg and Raffaella Mercurio  
Download for \$4.99 (REG. \$6.95) 60 pp, gr K–3

An alphabetized list of frequently used words to help kindergarten to grade 3, ESL and special education students develop confidence and skill as writers.



Word Wiz Teacher’s Guide - Download for \$4.99, 48 pp, gr K–3

### Student Centred Reading Programs

Four resources that encourage reading by providing teachers with a large selection of book tests which can be used to check on completion and comprehension of selected novels.



#### Independent Minds Independent Readers

by Maryam Moayeri  
Download for \$9.99 (REG. \$29.95) 243 pp, gr 5–12

#### A School Of Readers - Book One

A Student Centred Reading Program for Grades 4–9

by Maryam Moayeri & Jean Lawrence  
Download for \$19.99 (REG. \$54.95) 509 pp,



#### A School Of Readers - Book Two

A Student Centred Reading Program for Grades 7–12

by Maryam Moayeri & Jean Lawrence  
Download for \$19.99 (REG. \$59.95) 594 pp,

#### A School Of Readers - Book Three

A Student Centred Reading Program for Canadian Titles

by Maryam Moayeri & Jean Lawrence  
Download for \$9.99 (REG. \$29.95) 198 pp, gr 4–12

