

the Standard



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Collaborating for Excellence in Lake City, Florida

How does a district come together to address standards? Step 1 is to come together. Columbia County Schools in Lake City, FL, did this in a Summer Institute for three upper level schools—Columbia High, Fort White Middle and High, and Richardson Middle—in May/June, 2005. Step 2 is to address standards. They accomplished that also, creating a scope and sequence for each grade level, linking Sunshine State standards to each instructional unit, constructing performance-based assessments and rubrics, and identifying a target unit to prepare for piloting in the fall.

Step 3 is to create a professional learning community. Participants found that communicating and collaborating on student achievement issues can create a potent learning experience for students that exceeds what can be done at individual schools. “The value of bringing all the schools together cannot be overstated,” noted one teacher. Work time within content areas provided opportunities for teachers from the different schools, first of all, to get to know one another as respected colleagues, and secondly, to collaborate on a product that will provide consistent attention to state standards at each grade level in each subject. Cindy Clark from Richardson

Middle says, “Modern Red has given teachers from different schools within the county the opportunity to come together and build district level continuity.”

Teachers consistently expressed appreciation for the opportunity to work with others. One comment summed this up nicely, “Our ‘isolationism’ began to melt as we worked together to plan activities, lessons, and assessments for 2005-2006. At first I feared I would not fit in because the teachers in my group were not from my school, but soon I realized that we are all alike...we all want to do the best thing for our students.”

Language arts teacher Ernie Jones claims, “Mapping out our instruction and aligning our units to the standards was a positive and empowering experience. The potential to impact our students’ achievement is huge.” Teacher Tobyn Lee observed, “This process has empowered teachers to not only improve student achievement but themselves as well. It has given teachers direction, purpose, and a common goal where they can work and grow together professionally.”

Additional summer sessions addressed such areas as literacy and organizational issues. “Task forces allowed our work in Lake City to be truly comprehensive,” says Marci Kozinn, MRSB Site Manager for the district.

The support of the district personnel, vital to long-term success, motivates teachers to continue their efforts. From the beginning, Superintendent Sam Markham visited the training sessions. Assistant Superintendent L.C. Bradley and Kitty McElhaney, Director of Secondary Education have been supportive advocates.



Teacher teams work in their respective subject areas on their scope and sequence as Carmen Pough, MRSB Regional Site Manager, provides guidance and suggestions.

They remain closely involved and continuously show their support for the district’s students, as do building principals Joann Chamberlin, Keith Hatcher, and Keith Couey. When decisions are made or questions arise, it always comes down to one issue: How does this support or increase student performance? There is no more appropriate benchmark.

The summer institute established three conditions for a district noted for excellence: communication, coherence, and collegiality. Combine these with support and encouragement from the district office, coordination and planning with their site manager, ongoing training sessions, and the desire to make a difference for students, and you have exactly what it takes to make all students high achievers.



Columbia County teachers aligning standards with topical units of instruction.

Literacy Goes Hog Wild in Arkansas



St. Paul students who reached their reading goals proudly display their "Got Books?" shirts.

Literacy is a serious issue at St. Paul Elementary School in the Huntsville district in Arkansas. Their promotion of reading at all grade levels in this K-6 school, however, takes everyone for a walk on the lighter side. "We were looking for a way to engage our kids...to get them reading...and 6th grade teacher, Anita Lawrence, came up with 'Got Books?' last year," said Susan Stevens, principal of St. Paul Elementary.

Got Books?

A take-off on the famous Got Milk?® advertising campaign, the idea was an immediate hit. They printed t-shirts for the teachers to wear at Open House as a kick-off. The front of the shirt said, "Got Books?" and the back was imprinted with the words, "We do!" They put up a bulletin board with photos of the teachers wearing their t-shirts and holding up their favorite books. Each teacher, of course, has an obvious milk mustache.

The plan itself was simple: The school's Literacy Lab program set individual student goals and a school goal of 4000 books to be read. Ms. Stevens promised to milk a cow in front of the entire student body if the school met its goal. Students who reached their individual goals each received their own t-shirts, purchased by the PTA. As their community literacy partner, Chick-fil-A® donated little stuffed cows to present to students as they reached their half-way mark. The school held a monthly Tally Rally where numbers of books read were totaled to check progress toward goals. "One of the

greatest motivators," said Ms. Stevens "was the book talks given by our students at the rallies. These talks generated interest in the books and prompted others to try them out. Kids were so excited about their books they would stop me in the hall to share the best parts."

"We were hoping for a good response to the promotion," Ms. Stevens confided,



St. Paul Elementary teachers sporting this year's reading gear.

"but we were overwhelmed at the tremendous results within our student body. The enthusiasm was contagious." It seems that the enthusiasm spread outside the school as well. Parents and community members became nearly as excited as the students and teachers. One grandmother of a St. Paul student said, "My granddaughter doesn't go straight to the TV anymore...she goes straight to her backpack to dig out her books." Another parent said, "My daughter wants our family to turn off the television and read every night." And yet another, "I am so impressed with this reading program. One day I couldn't find my son so I be-

gan looking all around the house...I finally found him in his bedroom reading a book."

Powerful results

And did they reach their goal? Indeed they did, and they have increased it this year to 4500 books. Did Ms. Stevens milk a cow? Indeed she did! Getting the books into the children's hands has also become easier. Ms. Lawrence, the originator of this campaign, reported, "The middle school students return to my room not only to share about their reading but to donate their personal books to my classroom library." As teachers began checking out more and more copies from their personal collections, the Huntsville School District committed to purchasing books to provide extensive classroom libraries to meet the increased demand.

As would be expected, St. Paul students are not only reading more, they are reading better. Their understanding is greater, and they are able to discuss their stories with greater depth than before. "The special education students in my classroom," says Ms. Lawrence, "raised their reading levels at least two grade levels."

A Tough Act to Follow

So how will they top the success and keep the enthusiasm going? Teachers feel they are off to a good start with their new promotion, "Hog Wild about Reading." The teachers are now sporting hog noses as they urge their students to work toward their individual goals. A local artisan has created an acrylic clip for their backpacks showing a razorback and the "Hog Wild about Reading" slogan. A major difference this year is the inclusion of older grade-level students. "The high school is connected this year!" Ms. Stevens exclaims. "They were inspired by the great response to the 'Got Books?' effort last year and asked if they could be a part of this year's plan. We were thrilled, of course."

Getting students to read is serious business. And serious business in St. Paul, Arkansas, is great fun. Take their advice...go hog wild...read a book.



National Faculty Spotlight



Warning! Please wear sunglasses to read this article. Dr. Roxie McBride's glowing reputation as part of MRSH's National Faculty just may shine too brightly for the naked eye. Although a resident of Oklahoma, Roxie-sightings in schools across the country are not uncommon, for she is indeed a busy woman. She has been a MRSH trainer for nearly 4 years and was recently selected as one of the team to present *Literacy Now!*[™], MRSH's new literacy package, to school districts nationwide.

After 14 years as an elementary and secondary teacher and 19 years as a principal, Dr. McBride admits this fall is unusual. "It's the first time in 55 years I'm *not* getting ready to start school," she says. "I always loved school. I liked the feeling that I was not just making a living...I was making a difference."

So what does she do with all her spare time now that she is retired? "What

spare time?" she asks. "I basically retired so I could go to work. My new career with MRSH allows me to continue to work with teachers and students and, yet, have some personal time."

That personal time is full, indeed. Right after claiming, "I'm not very exciting," she talked about golfing, touring the country with her husband in their 40-foot RV, and riding about together on their Harley-Davidson[®]! At first, she was not interested in RVing. "That's what old people do," she said. "But, it has turned out to be great fun." Family and football are her other passions. She and her husband have a daughter and son, both attorneys, and a pair of "granddogs" she proudly photographs.

Professionally, Dr. McBride believes it is crucial for students to experience success. "I am from Oklahoma City," she says, "and I recall that after the bombing, dogs were brought in to rescue trapped people. Tragically, the dogs became discouraged

as they met with no success in locating survivors. So, firemen would go in and hide under the debris so the dogs could be successful. This gave them the encouragement to continue looking."

"We need to find ways for our students to be successful so they will be encouraged and continue trying." Dr. McBride's personal and professional relationships reflect this philosophy. When asked to describe her, colleagues and school personnel repeatedly used these words: energetic, inspiring, competent, conscientious, fun, and encouraging. "I am always happy to have Dr. McBride in my school," says one administrator. "She shows us what to do, and then she makes us believe we can do it."

That's what a teacher should do. That's Roxie McBride.



Dr. Roxie McBride

Packing for Orlando: 2006 MRSH National Educators' Conference

Do you have your bags packed for the 2006 National Educators' Conference? While it may be too early to actually close the suitcases, it is exactly the right time to begin thinking about what to take. To help with those decisions, here is a sneak peek of this event, courtesy of the office of Tim Gaddis, MRSH's Chief Operating Officer.

Be sure to take your thirst for knowledge about meeting students' needs. The theme this year is "Differentiating Instruction: Unlocking the Potential of Every Student." Sessions focusing on differentiation will be available for specific content areas, for different grade levels, and for different stages of implementation.

Mr. Gaddis says, "The program provides opportunities for attendees to dig deep into how we can meet the needs of all our students." The notion of digging deep will be personified by keynote speaker, Ms. Erin Gruwell, a renowned educator who continues to change lives by unlocking her students' thirst for knowledge.

Another item to have with you is a desire to hear success stories. This year, several schools are bringing their experiences to share during the "School Spotlight" portion of the conference. Anyone wishing to dis-

cuss the realities of changing instructional strategies will not want to miss these presentations.

Do you have an interest in developing collegial relationships with other professionals who perhaps have the same vision or struggle with the same concerns as you? Bring that interest along and spend some time making connections with educators from varied backgrounds who share the same desire.

Why not bring your family to enjoy the entire *Disney*[®] experience? The *Disney*[®] experience will be part of this year's conference. Two *Disney Institute*[®] programs are available to attendees: *Dynamics of Technology*[®] and *Wild by Nature*[®]. Pre-enrollment for these sessions, though, will be necessary.

Be sure to bring your sense of humor. Mr. Craig Zablocki, Saturday's keynote speaker, asserts that learning is too important to take too seriously! A former teacher, Zablocki has obtained justifiable praise for his ability to entertain and inform—convincing all of the link between positive humor and learning.

A critical item to pack is your thought-

ful exploration of an issue or subject. Different from previous years, the conference structure will allow participants several hours to explore an issue such as differentiating high school mathematics classes. "Participants will have not only rich conceptual discussions but a chance to practice new skills and make plans for their own schools," assured Mr. Gaddis.

So...do you need to call the travel agent now? Early registration begins late afternoon on Wednesday, February 8th. You may arrive early or stay late, but you definitely want to be present for the MRSH National Educators' Conference in Orlando, Florida, February 9-11, 2006.





Congratulations to MRSH schools making AYP!



- ◆Barnette Elementary, Fairbanks, AK
- ◆Alabama Ave Middle, Albertville, AL
- ◆Albertville Elementary, Albertville, AL
- ◆Ragland School, Ragland, AL
- ◆Kennedy Elementary, Windsor, CT
- ◆Terrell Junior High, Washington, DC
- ◆Dunbar Elementary, Laurel, DE
- ◆Moton Elementary, Brooksville, FL
- ◆Burgess Elementary, Atlanta, GA
- ◆Continental Colony Elementary, Atlanta, GA
- ◆Parkside Elementary, Atlanta, GA
- ◆Peyton Forest Elementary, Atlanta, GA
- ◆Price Middle School, Atlanta, GA
- ◆Whitefoord Elementary, Atlanta, GA
- ◆Hartwell Elementary, Hartwell, GA
- ◆Abingdon Middle, Abingdon, IL
- ◆Dieterich Elementary, Aurora, IL
- ◆O'Donnell Elementary, Aurora, IL
- ◆Wilson Elementary, Calumet City, IL
- ◆Edison Elementary, Danville, IL
- ◆Garfield Elementary, Danville, IL
- ◆Harris Elementary, Decatur, IL
- ◆South Shores Elementary, Decatur, IL
- ◆Channing Elementary, Elgin, IL
- ◆Hampton School, Hampton, IL
- ◆Marie Roberts-Caney Elementary, Lost Creek, KY
- ◆Flintstone Elementary, Flintstone, MD
- ◆Winter Street Elementary, Hagerstown, MD
- ◆Central Charter Academy, Ann Arbor, MI
- ◆Thomas Read Elementary, Shelby, MI
- ◆Walkerville Elementary, Walkerville, MI
- ◆Bagley Elementary, Bagley, MN
- ◆Bagley High, Bagley, MN
- ◆Webster Elementary, North St. Paul, MN
- ◆Milestone Elementary, Tchula, MS
- ◆Beaumont Elementary, Beaumont, MS
- ◆Henry Wilson Middle, Farmington, NH
- ◆Cadwalader Elementary, Trenton, NJ
- ◆Columbus Elementary, Trenton, NJ
- ◆PS #13, Paterson, NJ
- ◆PS #377, Brooklyn, NY
- ◆PS #48, Jamaica, NY
- ◆Lynchburg-Clay Elementary, Lynchburg, OH
- ◆Turkeyfoot Valley Area School, Confluence, PA
- ◆Honey Brook Elementary, Honey Brook, PA
- ◆Defiance Elementary, Defiance, PA
- ◆Robertsdale Elementary, Robertsdale, PA
- ◆McMinn County High, Athens, TN
- ◆Grand Junction Elementary, Grand Junction, TN
- ◆Pine View Elementary, Rockwood, TN
- ◆Andrew Jackson Intermediate, Jackson, TN
- ◆Vonore Elementary, Vonore, TN
- ◆Bransford Elementary, Springfield, TN
- ◆Cheatham Park Elementary, Springfield, TN
- ◆Krisle Elementary, Springfield, TN
- ◆Westside Elementary, Springfield, TN
- ◆Evans Elementary, Corpus Christi, TX
- ◆Fonwood Elementary, Houston, TX
- ◆Ware Elementary, Longview, TX
- ◆Refugio High School, Refugio, TX
- ◆Terrell High School, Terrell, TX
- ◆Vernon High School, Vernon, TX
- ◆Bryan Elementary, Hampton, VA
- ◆Elk Creek Elementary, Elk Creek, VA

At the time of this newsletter, not all states had *NCLB* data available. If your school made AYP and you do not see it on this list, please contact:

Judy Lyles
Information Coordinator
Modern Red SchoolHouse Institute
Toll free 888-275-6774, ext. 10 or
Email: jlyles@mrsh.org

Steve Brown

Director of Product Development

Mr. Brown joins MRSH with extensive experience in whole-school transformation. Serving as Project Director for the MetroVision School-to-Career Partnership in New Orleans was a culmination of more than 20 years of work in the public education arena. He began his work in education in a program for emotionally handicapped adolescents in Tennessee, which was the first of many settings in which he sought to create caring, personalized educational options for all youth. He holds a master's degree in



Steve Brown, Director of Product Development

education with special education emphasis and a bachelor of science in secondary education from the University of Tennessee.

MRSH Welcomes New Staff

Phyllis Roberts Regional Site Manager

Ms. Roberts has 10 years teaching experience in elementary and secondary mathematics and business education and 16 years as an elementary principal. She served as an assessor with the NASSP Principal Assessment Center and became director of a regional AmeriCorps program, where she selected and trained teaching assistants for multicultural classrooms. She is a coach with the Arkansas Leadership Academy and annually assists districts with academic planning as part of the state department's school support team. She holds a BBA and MED from the University of Arkansas and is completing her doctorate in Educational Administration there.



*Phyllis Roberts
Regional Site Manager*

Carmen Pough

Regional Site Manager

Ms. Pough has over 20 years of progressive responsibility in education positions. Before joining the MRSH staff, Ms. Pough was a MRSH trainer and an Education Program Associate with the South Carolina Department of Education. She has extensive experience in directing local, state, and regional training activities; staff development programs; conferences; and workshops. Ms. Pough has experience in training and motivating individuals of diverse ages and backgrounds. She earned her BS in Human Ecology from Hampton University (Summa cum Laude Graduate) and her Master's degree in education from South Carolina State University.



*Carmen Pough
Regional Site Manager*

Literacy Now!™ Takes Off

Literacy is a major concern for most schools in America, and in response to the current research data and the needs of intermediate and secondary students, MRSH is excited to announce the launching of its newest staff development: *Literacy Now!™* While targeting middle and high school teachers across subject areas, *Literacy Now!™* provides vital training for schools dealing with literacy issues in older students.

The 2004 Carnegie report, *Reading Next: A Vision for Action and Research in Middle and High School Literacy*, emphasizes the importance of ensuring “that every student gets beyond the basic literacy skills of the elementary grades, to the more challenging and more rewarding literacy of the middle and secondary years.” Getting there requires explicit instruction in reading skills.

To that end, Dr. Sharon Faber, MRSH Regional Site Manager and author of *How to Teach Reading When You’re Not a Reading Teacher*, has developed research-based training that addresses current practices in five critical areas: comprehension, vocabulary, fluency, writing, and leadership. While all five components reinforce best practices in literacy and are ideally taught as parts of a whole, *Literacy Now!™* is flexible in that schools may elect to purchase the components independently of one another.

Literacy Now!™ is the perfect complement to MRSH’s highly successful *Fundamentals of Reading*, which targets

teachers of grades K-8 in order to build their deep understanding of the reading process. Together, *Fundamentals of Reading* and *Literacy Now!™* provide districts with powerful tools for improving literacy achievement K-12.

Dr. Faber conducted a training session in Nashville in July to prepare a team of MRSH consultants and site managers. Carolyn Sullivan of MRSH says, “The room was a-buzz with creative, thoughtful input to Dr. Faber’s materials. Everyone really saw a need for this work that focuses on the older students.” Those who trained are enthusiastic about its quality and potential for boosting literacy levels in schools across the nation. “This module is focused, thorough, and well-paced. The teachers will love it,” stated a team member.

Each component consists initially of two days of training, and each training session models the strategies teachers will be asked to use in their classrooms. To date, teacher feedback is positive. A group of teachers from Silvis Jr. High stated that *Literacy Now!™* provides wonderful resources and ideas that are proving successful in their classrooms. Jean Houseman, librarian and 7th grade language arts teacher, says, “The activities work. My students are working with their ‘summer partners’ today, in fact.” In Oklahoma City, teachers from Jefferson MS were impressed with the amount they learned

and how engaged they were throughout the day.

Interacting with the teachers while modeling the strategies is Martha Jobe’s favorite part. “I enjoy watching their faces as they discover how they can use the strategies with their own students,” she says.

Literacy Now!™ is useful for teachers in any content area. Ms. Jobe continues, “It is empowering to implement such an explicit and systemic approach to teaching literacy within a school.”

Dr. Faber and the training team members are looking forward to a second Nashville session in late October that will focus on continued examination of the impact, materials, and delivery practices of *Literacy Now!™*. Current research, trainer expertise, and feedback from the teachers in our schools will drive our ongoing development of tools needed to help students reach proficiency.

The MRSH message to schools is this: If you want literacy...and you want it now...we can help.

The Literacy Now!™ Team

Captain:
Sharon Faber



Squad:

- 🔔 Loretta Blanks
- 🔔 Linda Edwards
- 🔔 Donna Gibson
- 🔔 Martha Jobe
- 🔔 Marci Kozinn
- 🔔 Lynn Lewis
- 🔔 Roxie McBride
- 🔔 Sonia Milrod
- 🔔 Margaret Officer
- 🔔 Janie Robinson
- 🔔 Beverley Romanin

Fundamentals Make a Difference: Student Achievement Shall Rise Again

Last year, nine schools partnering with MRSH chose to incorporate significant portions of MRSH’s *Fundamentals of Reading*. Developed by Dr. Joseph Czarnecki, the 15-day professional development program in reading is designed to give teachers in-depth understanding of phonics, phonological awareness, fluency, vocabulary development, and comprehension as well as practical activities to improve students’ skills in each of these areas. Most schools choose to work on a subset of the training program that addresses the specific weaknesses of their students.

Eight of the nine schools that had six or more days of training in *Fundamentals*

increased the proportion of their students achieving proficiency in reading or language arts between 2003-04 and 2004-05. On average, those schools increased the percentage of students scoring proficient on their state assessments by six percent.

Participants consider the major strengths of these sessions to be the expertise of MRSH trainers, the practical ideas, and the personalized approach taken in the workshops. When asked what part of today’s work they will apply in their classroom, participants identified such things as the use of reading centers, careful sequencing of instruction, and diagnostic activities. In

sum, participants were eager for more work in fundamentals!

MRSH and its partner schools are exceptionally lucky to have Dr. Czarnecki’s work available to them. He combines his extensive experience as a teacher, administrator, and reading specialist with his deep knowledge of research on how students learn to read. For over a decade, Dr. Czarnecki has taught graduate courses in reading at the University of Maryland and Johns Hopkins University. Now, all over the country, MRSH partners have access to his wisdom and practical advice on the fundamentals of reading.

Principals' Academy: Gems from Attendees

"Taking Charge of Your School Improvement Process" provided the focus and the goal for Modern Red's gathering of principals in Nashville this July. The 60 attendees gathered for two days to examine their roles as administrators of MRSH schools and to plan specific actions to take as instructional leaders.

A stellar job

One attendee reported that the major strength of this Academy was that each presenter did a "stellar job in presenting information relevant to my current job situation." Sally Kilgore, President & CEO of MRSH, opened the session with research on building and maintaining coherence, and developing professional learning communities. None of these elements can be accomplished without trust. The principal's role is central to establishing that trust.

MRSH staff addressed these issues:

- * The centrality of instructional leadership,
- * Administrators' Benchmarks, and
- * Utilizing MRSH's Leadership Team and Task Force structure.

Hearing Perry Hayes' story!

That story is what one participant said was the major strength of the Academy. Perry Hayes, principal of Ellis Middle School in Elgin, Illinois, shared how he involved his school staff in the Modern Red process:

"I was honored to be asked to speak," said Mr. Hayes, "but I was a little nervous. I remember sitting here three years ago and wondering, 'What have I gotten myself into?' Experienced principals assured me it would all come together, and it has for us. I wanted to give that assurance to the other principals who were new this year."

Mr. Hayes is a great example of building

capacity by utilizing everyone. He says, "We're just a proud school here. The Leadership Team is great...our test scores continue to climb...and there is no doubt in my mind it is due to our work with Modern Red. Our success is a tribute to my staff and MRSH training. I encourage everyone to get on board—it's been a great ride so far!"

B.B. King's® was perfect

Along with the Academy being well-organized and informative, a major strength for one attendee was MRSH's evening gathering at B.B. King's®. Attendees, MRSH staff, and families of both made the most of their time together. Over 100 of them gathered at Nashville's downtown venue for some great food and even better music. All agreed they enjoyed a rollicking good time; none admitted to staying out past curfew.

Ideas that are do-able

Another attendee thought that the Academy's major strength was the "excellent ideas that are actually do-able." The final session of the Academy involved making a plan of action—deciding on some concrete steps to take at the participants' respective schools. Bob Densmore, principal of Terrell HS in Terrell, Texas, had this to say: "The Principals' Academy was great. I took three members of my Leadership Team, and we came back with an outline of what we wanted to accomplish this year. We got feedback from other schools about second year goals, we came away with a strategy for our Task Forces, and we also came up with our motto for this year: 'Every Kid...Every Day.' We plan on coming back." Terrell is one of the largest high schools represented, with a total staff of over 100.

What about meeting the needs of a smaller school? Tom Berg is principal and superintendent of Hampton Elemen-

tary and Middle School in Hampton, Illinois. Hampton is a K-8 school with ten teachers and fewer than 200 students. He said, "The great benefit to me was in talking to other hard working people from all over the country. Even though our states have different terminology, we all speak the same language—the language of improving student achievement."

Challenges are the same

What do administrators want in the future? We asked attendees how we might improve future academies. Attendees suggested more school success stories, smaller breakout sessions, more problem-solving with peers, and extending the meeting to three or four days. One attendee said, "—can't think of a thing!" While MRSH staff are always thrilled to hear from such satisfied partners, they always find ways to improve from the counsel of participants of any MRSH endeavor.



Tom Berg, Principal of Hampton School in Illinois, enjoyed spending time in Nashville with other MRSH principals...and The King.

MRSH Teacher Named to All-USA Teacher Team

Pam Vaughn of Fordyce High School in Fordyce, Arkansas has been named as a member of USA Today's® 2005 All-USA Teacher Team. She engages her students in grades 9-12 in the areas of physical science, biology, and chemistry. Fordyce High is a NASA school, and more than 30

of her students have been recognized nationally by NASA, with several flying across the country to present papers.

Join us in congratulating Pam Vaughn for this national recognition. She is another exemplary MRSH teacher with the "right stuff!"



Students prepare their rockets for launch

From the President's Desk...

What Works for All Students

Increasing our capacity to serve the needs of all students usually requires that educators find ways to differentiate instruction. Researchers are finding, though, that some instructional strategies work for all students.

Researchers refer to this approach as a "universal design for learning." The term is adapted from architects who, in the past 20 years, have sought to design homes, office buildings, and museums in ways that work for everyone. So, for instance, designing a sloping entrance to an office building (instead of, or in addition to, steps) allows not only people confined to wheelchairs to easily enter the building, but also moms with baby carriages, people with rolling suitcases, and elderly people who might find stairs too challenging. For the past decade, education researchers pursued a parallel strand of thinking for classroom instruction. They now have some rather convincing results.

Doug and Lynn Fuchs, among the most highly regarded researchers in special education, find that peer tutoring may be the most powerful means of helping *all* students improve their skills in reading and mathematics. Both those who are the tutor and the tutee gain understanding and improve their performance on standardized tests. The Fuchs, though, have not just generated research findings, but have developed protocols that students can use in questioning each other about texts or mathematical problems. They are available as part of the Peer Assisted Learning project at (<http://kc.vanderbilt.edu/kennedy/pals/>).

The power of peer tutoring was first dis-

covered accidentally when Henry Levin sought to evaluate the effectiveness of computer assisted instruction. In his study, he used peer tutoring as one of the alternative methods against which to compare the effectiveness of computer assisted instruction. Much to his surprise, peer tutoring turned out to be far more effective than any of the methods he explored. (Maybe those one-room schoolhouses were not as limiting as our ancestors thought.)

S.R. Miller and colleagues find that peer tutoring is educationally effective for students with disabilities because of social and educational benefits for both the tutor and tutee. Students engaged in peer tutoring have more opportunities to respond and question than in whole class instruction. Student engagement and motivation to learn is also enhanced with such methods.

Print-rich environments are immensely valuable to all young children. Students with disabilities benefit from classrooms with large supplies of books, pictorial and word labels, and writing projects always available for them to pursue. For English Language Learners, such print-rich environments should be used in dialogue with teachers and peers—especially in ways that allow them to link their own experiences with what they are reading. It goes without saying that students whose families are unable to provide print-rich environments in their homes also benefit immensely from such classrooms.

When it comes to mathematics, manipulatives and student-drawn illustrations have a strong track record in helping

students with disabilities and English Language Learners. Sequencing experience with manipulatives, drawing, and numerical representations helps all students acquire a deeper understanding of mathematical concepts.

Finally, explicit instruction in reflective learning strategies—in part, what educators call metacognitive skills—is especially important to students with disabilities. In fact, all students are more likely to succeed in school, and as adults, if they learn how to monitor their learning: what's making sense, what's not, what they need to review, etc. Some students need more coaching to acquire these skills than others.

Providing rubrics for class projects and assignments is an integral part of helping students to reflect on their work and what they are learning.

Students with disabilities and English Language Learners have special needs, and one of the most important is to share common ground with students in general education classrooms. Expanding our toolkit to include not only ways of differentiating instruction, but also ways of designing instruction that are universally helpful allows all students to share a common ground.

Sally B. Kilgore, President/CEO

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February 9-11, 2006

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**Modern Red SchoolHouse
Institute**
1901 21st Avenue, South
Nashville TN 37212

888-ASK-MRSH
(888-275-6774)
615-320-8804
Fax 615-320-5366
Email: info@mrsh.org

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E-mail Story Ideas to:
Jlyles@mrsh.org

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Welcome New MRSH Sites

Alabama

- ◆ Center Point Elementary
Center Point, AL



Michigan

- ◆ Muskegon Heights
Middle School
Muskegon Heights, MI



Tennessee

- ◆ Humboldt City Schools
Humboldt, TN
- ◆ Andrew Jackson Intermediate School
Jackson, TN



Florida

- ◆ Cutler Ridge Elementary School
- ◆ Miami Heights
Elementary School
- ◆ Youth Co-op Charter
School
Miami, FL



Minnesota

- ◆ Southgate Elementary
School
Austin, MN
- ◆ Clearbrook-Gonvick School
Clearbrook, MN
- ◆ Red Lake County Elementary
School
Plummer, MN



Virginia

- ◆ Charles City County Schools
Charles City, VA
- ◆ Essex County Schools
Tappahannock, VA
- ◆ Lunenburg County
Schools
Victoria, VA



Illinois

- ◆ Epiphany School
Normal, IL



Louisiana

- ◆ Downsville High School
- ◆ Farmerville Elementary
School
Farmerville, LA



Pennsylvania

- ◆ Scott Middle School
Coatesville, PA



- ◆ Pittsylvania County Schools
Chatham, VA
- ◆ Wythe County Schools
Wythe, VA