

The Education Fund's

# IDEAS

2005-2006

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Author of *The First Days of School*  
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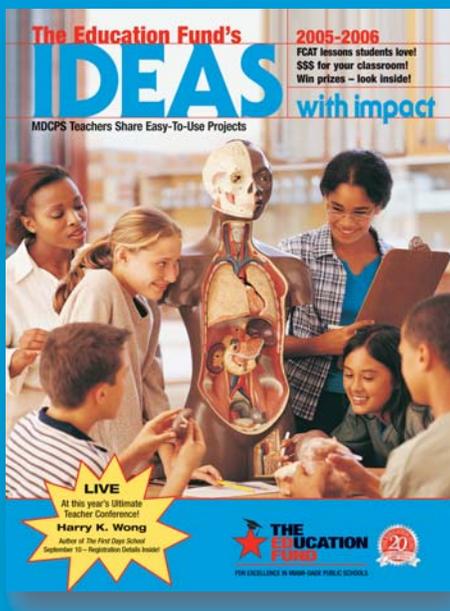


FOR EXCELLENCE IN MIAMI-DADE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**T**he Education Fund enlists the support of the private sector to improve Miami-Dade schools and bring excellence to public education.

This work reaches all 300+ schools and 20,000+ teachers in Miami-Dade public schools, and benefits hundreds of thousands of students.

Currently, The Education Fund offers more than a dozen different initiatives to help our public schools.



The IMPACT II program, which encompasses this catalog and the companion Idea EXPO, is one example.

The Education Fund also raises funds for public-school projects, acts as a fiscal agent, and seeks out innovative ways to help our public schools educate all of our children.

**For more information on our programs, turn to page 34 or visit [www.educationfund.org](http://www.educationfund.org).**



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The Education Fund

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- 5.** Give a donation of stock or property to The Education Fund.
- 6.** Make a cash donation or use your credit card on our secure Web site: logon to [www.educationfund.org](http://www.educationfund.org) and click "Donate now!"

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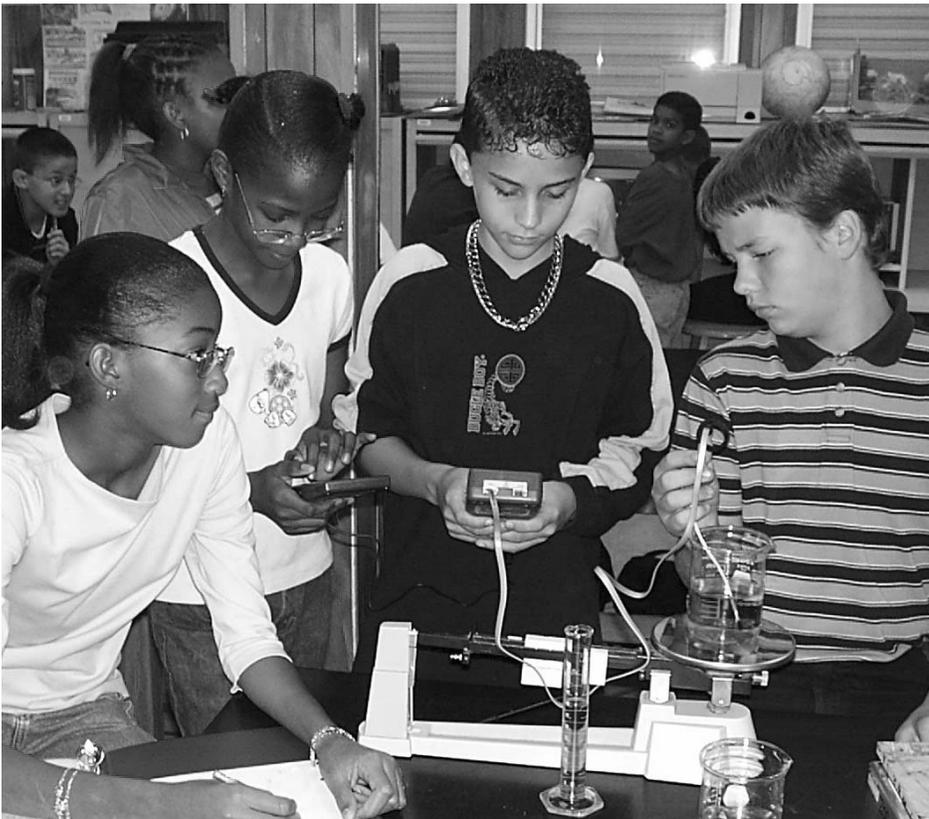
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# The Education Fund's IMPACT II

**IMPACT II** is a program of The Education Fund that focuses on strengthening curriculum, student achievement and leadership in Miami-Dade County Public Schools by identifying and connecting teachers who exemplify professionalism and creativity in their classrooms. This comprehensive network has specially designed programs that encompass beginning teachers to experienced teachers through the original Network Model, Teachers Network Leadership Institute and the New Teacher Initiative.



## Network Model

Teachers who have developed successful classroom teaching methods are given grants to package and market their proven projects through the *Ideas with IMPACT* catalog, the Idea EXPO and Idea Packets that contain curriculum materials such as lesson plans, worksheets and resource lists.

- Disseminator grants help teachers further develop and disseminate proven practices they have used successfully in their own classroom. Apply by Dec.1, 2005.
- *Ideas with IMPACT* catalog – Explore this resource of new teaching ideas. Projects can be used exactly as they are or can be modified to meet a classroom's special needs. Contact the disseminator of the idea for more information.
- The Idea EXPO – The Teacher Conference. Get new ideas and make connections with experienced teachers during the IMPACT II project display exhibition and workshop sessions. Special features include a master teaching session with Dr. Harry Wong on classroom management, a luncheon and free curriculum packets.
- Adapter grants are available for any project in the IMPACT II network of ideas from the past 15 years. Just connect with the Disseminator of the idea, request an Idea Packet and receive funds to implement in your classroom.

# ACT II: A Network of Ideas

## Teachers Network Leadership Institute

The Teachers Network Leadership Institute (TNLI) is an action research initiative that connects education policy with actual classroom practice to improve student achievement. IMPACT II provides a monthly forum for teachers to formulate their research, publish their findings, strategize their dissemination and discuss current education issues. To become an action research fellow and receive a grant to conduct action research in your classroom, please contact The Education Fund, 305-892-5099, ext. 18 or apply by September 15th using the application found in the insert of this catalog.

## New Teacher Initiative

IMPACT II connects new teachers to veteran teachers, resources and a network of on-going support from various programs of The Education Fund.

- 1) The Idea EXPO – The Teacher Conference has special features for new teachers including workshops on classroom management and opportunities to network. It is an ideal forum to link up with



veteran teachers and learn their tried and true teaching strategies.

**The renowned author of “The First Days of School”, Dr. Harry K. Wong, will be giving a master teaching session at this year’s IDEA EXPO on Saturday, Sept. 10, 2005.**



- 2) Adapter grants are a quick and easy way to implement a Disseminator teacher’s idea in a beginning teacher’s classroom. Along with the funds, you not only receive a detailed Idea Packet with lesson plans and resource list, but coaching from the Disseminator teacher. Substitution coverage is available to visit a veteran teacher’s classroom or vice-versa.
- 3) New teacher web site of daily classroom specials, tips and “ask an expert” section is managed by national IMPACT II – The Teachers Network at [www.teachersnetwork.org](http://www.teachersnetwork.org).

## HOW IMPACT II CAN WORK FOR YOU

**ATTEND** the IMPACT II Idea EXPO – The Teacher Conference. Look for a conference registration form in the inserts of this catalog, register

on-line at [www.educationfund.org](http://www.educationfund.org) or call 305-892-5099, Ext. 18 for more information.

**BECOME** an IMPACT II Disseminator or an action research fellow and be featured in next year’s *Ideas with IMPACT* catalog. IMPACT II awards \$750 Disseminator grants to educators willing to share the successful teaching ideas they have designed and implemented in their classrooms. \$750 fellowships for action research are also offered. Apply at [www.educationfund.org](http://www.educationfund.org) or use applications found in this catalog’s inserts.

**APPLY** for an IMPACT II Adapter Grant to purchase materials to adapt one of the ideas featured in this catalog or past years’ catalogs. Here’s how to qualify:

1. Select an idea (from past or current catalogs\*)
2. Attend EXPO and sign-up for workshop on that idea.  
or  
Request an Idea Packet and discuss with the Disseminator your ideas for implementing the project idea.
3. Complete Adapter application.
4. Submit to:  
The Education Fund  
900 NE 125 Street, Suite 110  
North Miami, FL 33161

\*For information on the past 15 years of IMPACT II projects, visit The Education Fund’s web site at [www.educationfund.org](http://www.educationfund.org).

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Register today for  
The Education Fund's  
16th Annual  
IMPACT II Idea EXPO -  
The Teacher Conference  
See page 7 of the insert pages  
or register online at  
[www.educationfund.org/expo.html](http://www.educationfund.org/expo.html)

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### Publisher

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### Production Director/Executive Editor

Tim Dodson

### Managing Editor

Lorna Pranger Valle

### Development Officer

Marianne (Mimi) Pink

### Designed & Printed by

Original Impressions, Inc. • Miami, FL

### The Education Fund

900 NE 125th St., Suite 110

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305-892-5099 • 305-892-5096 (fax)

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\*\* If you designated The Education Fund during the campaign that took place in the fall of 2004 and your name does not appear on this list, please call Mimi Pink at 305-892-5099, ext. 21. Thank you!

# All That Jazz

**T**his cross-curriculum project aims to expose students to jazz music both historically and within local arts and cultures. The classroom teacher works closely with a teacher of arts education on creative and fun activities that present famous artists and their music as well as typical jazz instruments and ensembles. The students work in groups to research various jazz artists, styles and composers. Each individual student researches and interviews an artist. As a team, the students develop a presentation with an auditory component or demonstration that outlines a particular jazz ensemble and its music.

The unit culminates with two live performances: a field trip to hear a local school jazz band and a visit by a local professional jazz quartet who perform, answer questions and provide demonstrations of special sounds and techniques on their instruments.

## Students

The project was used with 36 fifth-grade students and is adaptable for all upper elementary levels. The students who participated in this activity met twice a week for a 30-minute music class. The activities appeal to all achievement levels.



## Staff

Janet Duguay Kirsten is a National Board Certified Teacher who has been teaching for 13 years. She holds a master's degree from the University of Miami School of Music and is currently a doctoral candidate.

## Material and Resources

Classroom facilities are appropriate. A stage area or ample classroom space would be necessary for the visiting jazz performing group. Also needed are the *Jazz for Young People* curriculum and class sets of the books: *Ben's Trumpet*, *The Jazz Kid*, and Cleveland Lee's *Beale Street Band*.

Sponsored by:



**“Children love music and jazz is a particularly inviting medium to incorporate into the curriculum to enhance the attention span and creativity of students.”**

*Janet Duguay Kirsten*

## Contact

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Principal: Angeles Fleites

# See the World Through a Pinch Pot!

*Originally a Joan and Milton Baxt Foundation Teacher Mini-Grant*



In this nine-week project, students are exposed to the art of the “pinch pot” method used by ceramicists for thousands of years. Through the introduction of five distinct cultures, students will compare and contrast the similarities and differences of each culture through the creation of five pinch pots. Included in the study are Japanese glazed tea bowls and Pueblo Indian pinch pot musical instruments. Integral to the project is the observation of an in-residence (Miami Ceramic League) ceramic artist creating pots and other objects using the pinch pot method.

## Students

All art students at the elementary charter participated. It can also be implemented with students in middle and senior high school.

## Staff

Sara Gagliano-Alfaro received her master’s and bachelor’s degrees from Tufts University and The School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. She has been teaching art for 10 years. She is also certified in museum studies and has taught art history for children at Harvard University’s Semitic Museum in Cambridge, Mass. and at MOCA in North Miami. She serves as a Florida Mentor Teacher. Ms.

Gagliano-Alfaro exhibits her own artwork in galleries and art fairs internationally. Her paintings are inspired by her students and her experiences as an art educator.

## Materials and Resources

Art materials including earthenware clay, and color glazes. Books and videos on the cultures studied are also needed.



*Sponsored by:*



“Through this exciting hands-on adventure into the history of ceramic art, past customs and cultures are studied as well as mathematics and FCAT strategies.”

*Sara Gagliano-Alfaro*

## Contact

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Principal: Ana Cordal

# W.E.A.V.E. – Weaving with Everyday Apparel using Varied Elements

**A** multi-sensory approach to skill acquisition is often an essential learning tool, as hands-on experiences integrate many cognitive and motor functions. This project integrates eye-hand coordination, receptive language skills, sequencing skills, fine and gross motor skills and sensory awareness by utilizing old clothes and a little imagination! Students assist in tearing second-hand shirts, pants, sheets and pillowcases into strips. A warp is strung with thick yarn from the ceiling to waist-length. The strips, one at a time, are strung through a hole made in a yardstick. The stick is used to weave the strips in and out of the yarn. As the colors and fabrics are varied, so is the experience. Music that is conducive with the types and colors of fabric is played to add to the experience.

Extensions to the project include researching cultures utilizing weaving as a mainstay as well as exploring patterns, materials and objects used in weaving. Recycling and all of its dynamics add another dimension to the project.

## Students

A small group of profoundly mentally handicapped boys, ages 13 to 19 years old, both ambulatory and non-ambulatory, have participated in this project. It has also been used with a middle school group of higher-functioning autistic students.

## Staff

Debra Gaudet has been involved with developmentally disabled



students for 28 years, in both the classroom and in the community. She has an M.ED. in Education/ Special Education and is an NBPTS candidate. She has received numerous grants to integrate ESE students into the academic and social life of the school. Ms. Fulton, a paraprofessional, provides hand-over-hand assistance with the very low functioning students.

## Materials and Resources

Clothing is donated or found in thrift stores. Wood strips or PVC pipe is hung from the ceiling to hang the warp. Also needed are yarn, pattern books, and lightweight yardsticks. Battery-operated scissors are available through AbleNet.

*Sponsored by:*

**Florida Matching Grants Program**

*“This kinesthetic project can be taught from the most simplistic vantage point to the more complex. It improves students’ motor and social skills as they create unique weavings for a variety of purposes.”*

*Debra Gaudet*

## Contact

Debra Gaudet  
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Principal: Ellen O. Wright

# Corn Through Time

**F**rom shucking corn in a contest to making cornhusk dolls to creating their own biodegradable packing peanuts by microwaving a cornstarch mixture, students actively explore the story of corn in the Americas. They read of corn's legendary origin in Indian folklore, calculate its yield per acre in the present day Corn Belt, and imagine future uses for ethanol as a renewable energy source. With this interdisciplinary collection of activities, students grow corn, perform a play about Squanto and corn in colonial life, experiment with popcorn, and collect and analyze types of packaging for their environmental impact.

## Students

This project is designed for students in grades 2-5 ranging from below average to gifted. It can also be altered to accommodate ESL as well as ESE students. The activities focus on exploration and discovery in history, math and science, with an emphasis on teamwork.

## Staff

Mickey Santerre has taught for 24 years, in both private school and public school in Miami-Dade County. She is a National Board Certified Teacher and holds a master's degree in ESE with an emphasis on

varying exceptionalities. She holds a specialist's degree and is working on a doctorate in science education. Mrs. Santerre has received The Education Fund's Teacher Mini-Grant and IMPACT II Disseminator grants for M and M (Math and Mentors) Buddies and E.N.T.I.C.E.

## Materials and Resources

A small garden plot is ideal but not necessary. Soil, raw fish, seeds, planting pots and a microwave are needed. Colored Indian corn is used for mosaics and jewelry. A field trip to Fruit and Spice Park and a guest speaker from the agriculture sector are beneficial.



*Sponsored by:*

**Florida Matching Grants Program**

*“Students learn through a collection of unusual, interdisciplinary activities how one commodity influenced the history of the Americas.”*

*Mickey Santerre*

## Contact

Mickey Santerre  
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Principal: Pamela Brown

# Inside Africa

Originally a Citibank Success Fund Grant

**S**tudents produce a variety show incorporating visual art, geography, science, music, reading, writing, and drama to illustrate their learning about Africa. The purpose of the variety show is to use an array of teaching strategies to make social studies and science concepts accessible to a diverse student population. Interdisciplinary lessons reinforce conceptual content and produce repeated learning and assessment opportunities. Students research, read and tell African folk tales in the oral tradition. They then collaboratively write and illustrate their own folk tale which is put to music and dance.

## Students

Participating in the project were approximately 500 students, grades 2-5, including low academic achievement and learning disabled. This project can be adapted to any student population or size group.

## Staff

Mark L. Rosenkrantz is a National Board Certified Teacher in Early and Middle Childhood Art, 2004-2005 Teacher of The Year, Charles D. Wyche Jr. Elementary and a multiple-year recipient of Citibank Success Fund Grants. The project has been used for the past two years. Teacher collaboration is essential to its success.



## Materials and Resources

Materials needed include an African geography video, African literature, posters of African art images, and art materials. Enhancements

include a field trip to view the African art collection at the Lowe Art Museum and a presentation by Dr. Suzanne Banas of the Richmond Heights Middle Zoo magnet program.

*Sponsored by:*

## Florida Matching Grants Program

“Anticipation of a culminating event in which students display evidence of their learning, as well as participation in a learning community, provide motivation for students to progress through the instructional sequence.”

*Mark L. Rosenkrantz*

## Contact

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Principal: Mrs. Patricia Urban

# Collaborate, Communicate – Create a Community!

Originally a Citigroup Team Mentor Grant



This project alleviates the drill-and-kill activities that are correlated with studying for the FCAT. Using text from a novel students are reading to practice reading and FCAT prep skills is more appealing to students than standard worksheets. To further instill these skills, they create lessons and corresponding activities to teach other students those same skills. These aids are then posted on the student-created web site and accessible to all. Students are much more enthusiastic about learning reading skills when they play an active role in creating activities and lessons for their peers.

## Students

This project was used with 80 students in grades 10-11 with learning disabilities who met for one hour every day. This project is easily adapted to other age and achievement levels.

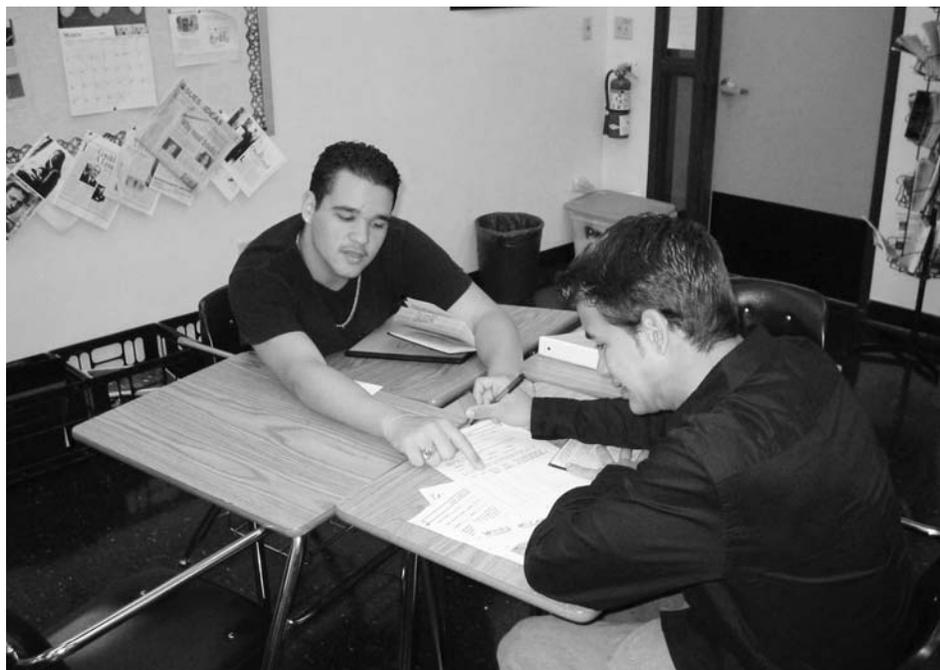
## Staff

Yvette M. Calleiro has been teaching for nine years. She was the CEC Rookie Teacher of the Year for 1997 and a Dade County finalist for the 1996-97 Sallie Mae Outstanding First Year Teacher Award. She is also a National Board Certified Teacher with a master's degree in both Special Education and Reading Education.

## Materials and Resources

Students need access to a computer, the Internet, web site creation software, digital camera, scanner and novels to read. The Idea Packet

for this project walks students through creating activities and lessons for a novel as well as provides the steps to start a web site.



*Sponsored by:*

**Florida Matching Grants Program**

*“Sharing their work with an audience that extends beyond their classroom galvanizes students to build their skills and produce exemplary work.”*

*Yvette M. Calleiro  
& Elizabeth Aguila*

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Principal: Marcos M. Moran

# I Hear Many “Voices”

**D**eciphering literature often seems daunting to students who lack the skills to find the “voice” of various authors and poets in literature. These skills are necessary to acquire an appreciation of the written word, to move to advanced-level classes and to succeed in college literature classes. Correctly recognizing and using rhetorical devices of tone, imagery, syntax, detail and diction is paramount to demystifying literature. This unit provides students a clear understanding and knowledge of these devices with definitions, extensive examples and short introductory pieces. Once the in-depth, nine-week unit is completed, the exemplary lessons found in the workbook, *Voices Lessons*, can be implemented.

## Students

This project was designed to prepare tenth-grade honors students for AP Literature, but has also proven useful in the “regular” classes to verse students in the basic skills of analysis. Given the chance, all students can achieve varying degrees of success. It has been used in ESOL classes by eliminating the verbosity of the definitions. Also, by selecting simpler literary pieces it can be used with low-performing students.

## Staff

Sheila Dymond belongs to Phi Delta Kappa honor fraternity and NCTE. She has a master’s degree and has been teaching for 15 years. After implementing the gifted program at Miami Palmetto Senior High, she moved to Varela Senior High when it opened, to teach tenth-grade

regular, honors and Advanced Placement literature and composition. She has been using and tweaking this project for 5 years.

## Materials and Resources

An overhead projector, the workbook, *Voices Lessons*, and the disseminator’s CD, which contains all information for the unit.



*Sponsored by:*

**Florida Matching Grants Program**

“All students benefit from learning the basic skills of analysis, which help them find the author’s voice and purpose in literature – essential skills for success on the FCAT.”

*Sheila Dymond*

## Contact

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Principal: Millie Fornell

# Reading Roundup

**R**eading Roundup reinforces fine motor, critical thinking, reading and writing skills. At least once a week, each student is sent home with a “Reading Buddy” tote bag that includes books and activities on a high-interest theme. For instance, the Happy Birthday Bag contains four birthday books, a reader response journal covered in birthday wrapping paper, a reading bear buddy, a game and a birthday certificate, hat and pencil. Another example is the Under the Sea bag containing books on the theme, a reader response journal, a fishing game with magnetized poles, and a Nemo reading buddy. This bag is the class favorite.

## Students

Students participating in this program were ESE kindergarten through first-grade students. Most are from low-income families with limited access to books. The program runs on a daily basis and is adaptable to any grade level and/or achievement level.

## Staff

Kristin Garcia has taught in an ESE setting for four years: one year in an autistic setting and three in a self-contained LD unit. She was named “Rookie Teacher of the Year” and was the school’s “Teacher of the Year” in 2004.



## Materials and Resources

The bags can be put together from items found in school supply, thrift, dollar and book trading stores. A typical bag contains:

- A decorated canvas tote bag
- 4-7 books on a particular theme
- A “Reading Buddy” - typically a stuffed animal that can usually be found in a thrift or dollar store.

- A composition book covered in theme-based wrapping paper or artwork drawn by students
- A printable activity or craft to be done together at home with parent.
- A game or puzzle of some kind related to the theme.

Students are encouraged to visit the media center to check out any additional books on a theme or by an author they enjoyed.

*Sponsored by:*

**Florida Matching Grants Program**

*“Reading Roundup ties home and school together to promote reading as an enjoyable lifetime pursuit.”*

*Kristin Garcia*

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# Reeling in Reading

Originally a Citigroup Team Mentor Grant

**R**eeling in Reading, an after-school club for struggling readers, encourages reading by focusing on an activity they love - fishing! Activities that develop valuable real-life skills and reading assignments are infused with the world of fishing and marine life. From researching Florida's fragile coral reefs and marine species to practicing casting to reading Zane Grey's fishing tales, students not only prepare to participate in fishing as a recreational or competitive sport but prepare to pass the vocabulary and comprehension portions of the FCAT.



## Students

Although aimed at low-performing male students, female students showed interest and became part of the group.

## Staff

Anna Menendez has been teaching in Miami-Dade for more than 20 years. She has a master's in reading and is currently the Reading Leader. She has received grants for several other reading programs.

## Materials and Resources

*The Florida Sportman* magazine, Zane Grey's *Outdoorsman: Hunting and Fishing Tales*, and videos on fishing techniques are needed. Visits by anglers demonstrating their

craft and a speaker from the Marine Patrol on boat safety are beneficial. A field trip to attend a workshop at the IGFA Fishing Hall of Fame and Museum is recommended. Fishing equipment donated to the students is used to practice casting at school.

*Sponsored by:*



**MIAMI BILLFISH TOURNAMENT**

"Fishing is the lure used to reel in reluctant readers for a reading club. As part of examining the culture of Florida fishing, students learn about the fragility of marine life and how best to sustain it."

*Anna N. Menendez*

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# "Sense-sational" Story Time Snacks

Originally an Assurant Solutions Teacher Mini-Grant

In this project, children use their senses in meaningful, developmentally appropriate cooking activities, which provide multiple opportunities to improve their pre-reading, math and science skills. Integrating cooking activities with stories such as *If You Give a Pig A Pancake*, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, and *More Spaghetti*, *I Say* promotes and extends math concepts such as counting, comparing quantities, and using standards units of measure. Science skills are used to describe, classify and compare the physical properties of the cooking ingredients. Digital photos, which capture the cooking activities, are used in student cookbooks to impact students' pre-reading and literacy skills.

## Students

Twenty-four pre-kindergarten students participated in this project. It is suitable for any primary grade level.

## Staff

Mayra Perez is a National Board Certified Teacher who has been teaching for 19 years, 15 as a pre-kindergarten teacher. Rebecca Ortiz, a paraprofessional for nine years who has worked with pre-k through high school students, assists with the project.

## Materials and Resources

Various cooking utensils, measurements cups, bowls, electric griddle, small toaster oven, digital camera

and ingredients for different recipes are needed. Other books used are *The Gingerbread Man*, *Green Eggs & Ham*, and *Corduroy Baked a Cake*.



Sponsored by:



"Young children make connections between literature, math and science in a "sense-sational" way that appeals to their unique learning style."

*Mayra Perez*

## Contact

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# Strive for "5" with Lemony Snicket

This project seeks to engage all students in a class, many of whom may be reluctant readers. It will appeal to intermediate students, especially boys, who would enjoy reading about a "series of unfortunate events" of which there are 11 best sellers – all of them exceedingly popular. It is not only fun to read but teaches children inventiveness to overcome obstacles as well as compassion towards others. This is an all-inclusive, user-friendly unit in which one book may be completed within a month. Easy-to-use lesson plans and enrichment activities follow developments in the books.

## Students

All intermediate elementary students benefit, but it is especially effective with low-performing students who are reluctant readers.

## Staff

Beth Reis and Carole Slonin are gifted facilitators and have both taught for 29 years. They have created interdisciplinary units and have assisted on many grant-writing teams. Both have received The Education Fund's IMPACT II Disseminator and Adapter grants, Citibank Success Fund grants and Teacher Mini-Grants. In addition, Ms. Reis was a Teacher of the Year Region Semi-Finalist in 1990 and has received a Retrofit Grant and a Dade Reading Council grant.



## Materials and Resources

The first novel in the series is needed to complete the unit. Classroom computers were bookmarked with related Internet sites. Also, a writing and publication center was set up in the classroom.

Further research into how boys and girls learn differently, the handicap boys will experience in the workforce for lack of communication skills and how schools can adapt to these changes can be found in Michael Gurian's *Boys and Girls Learn Differently*.

Sponsored by:



"It is well established that girls will read and enjoy books that appeal to boys, but the opposite is not usually true. The Lemony Snicket series can be used to instill a positive attitude towards reading and writing and to motivate all students to strive for "5" on the FCAT."

*Beth Reis & Carole Slonin*

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# Once Upon a Math Lesson... Everyone Had Fun!

Originally a Catherine Scripps Rodriguez Family Foundation Teacher Mini-Grant



**M**ath anxiety is alleviated with math games, songs and hands-on application of math concepts to real-life situations. Abstract concepts of mathematics become concrete to students as they connect mathematics to all subject areas through selections of children's literature that introduce the five strands in mathematics. For example, geometry, reading, writing and drawing is combined in the creation of a comic strip, *The Adventures of Poly Gon*, a super hero, who uses math to save the world. Geometry is further explored with activities linked to the books, *Sir Cumference* and *The Greedy Triangle*. To study algebraic thinking, students, as they read *Math Curse*, keep a daily diary of math problems confronted by the main character of the book.

## Students

Fourth- and fifth-grade gifted students in a full-time bilingual program in which students work 60% of the time in English and 40% in Spanish participated in this project. It can be adapted to all ages and achievement levels.

## Staff

Marlene Figueroa, a National Board Certified Teacher, has been teaching mathematics and science in the gifted program for 14 years. She is working on a master's in Reading.

She is a recipient of three Education Fund Teacher Mini-Grants and a Disseminator grant for *Fantastic Units = FUN*.

## Materials and Resources

Access to an extensive collection of math-related picture books and

novels that teach the five mathematical strands is best. The classroom space is set up with five round tables that facilitate the students working in groups. Work projects are rotated in baskets around the room.



*Sponsored by:*

**The William J. and  
Tina Rosenberg Foundation**

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**“This special multidisciplinary unit infuses the different subject areas with the five strands of mathematics by using examples in children’s literature.”**

*Marlene E. Figueroa*

# p Week

Originally an Assurant Solutions Teacher Mini-Grant

It has been said that no symbol in mathematics has evoked as much mystery, romanticism, misconception, and human interest as the number  $\pi$ . So, what better way to rally students around mathematics than through a weeklong post-FCAT  $\pi$  celebration? This project expands the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics' " $\pi$  Day" (March 14) to a whole week of daily contests and math class activities. Competitive and didactic activities surrounding  $\pi$  foster the use of mathematics in unique ways.  $\pi$ -related lessons range from basic Mathematics for the ESE population to Calculus for advanced students. The daily contests are included in morning announcements, the school paper and the mathematics hallway display. Contestants compete for a grand prize in a " $\pi$ -off" competition in which they are given 3 minutes and 14 seconds to write as many  $\pi$  digits as they can. Mathematics, TV production, ceramic and painting classes all take part in the preparation and celebration of  $\pi$  Week.  $\pi$  songs are sung,  $\pi$  digits recited and even "pie" is eaten!

## Students

All math classes as well as the entire student body are encouraged to participate in  $\pi$  Week celebrations.



## Staff

Sandra Arguelles Daire, a National Board Certified Teacher, has been teaching for 16 years. She has an Educational Specialist degree in curriculum and instruction and was the 1995 Dade County Math Teacher of the Year. She is currently a Math Department co-chair.

## Materials and Resources

The Idea Packet contains  $\pi$ -related lessons for inclusion in algebra and geometry through calculus and statistics. It also includes  $\pi$  daily contest questions and  $\pi$  Week trivia quizzes. Each activity requires its own materials, from beads to make  $\pi$  necklaces to circular objects to measure for a regression activity.

*Sponsored by:*

## Florida Matching Grants Program

"This weeklong  $\pi$  pep rally puts mathematics in the spotlight and raises awareness of how fascinating it can be through entertaining and exciting activities."

*Sandra A. Daire*

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# Be Water Smart... Don't Let It Go Down The Pipes.....

**S**ince water is one of the most precious resources, water conservation is an important concept to teach young children. This comprehensive unit includes the water cycle, water sources, uses and conservation of water, water pollution, water quality, wastewater treatment and water reuse.

Throughout the unit, students conduct experiments, take surveys, make posters for a school-wide contest, create a *Down the Pipes!* newsletter and develop a Down the Pipes! web page that depicts the school's water-related activities and offers links to water conservation resources, games, and online activities.

## Students

This project is suitable for primary and intermediate grades. The lessons can be done individually or in collaborative groups.

## Staff

Rosa M. Sampedro has been teaching for Miami-Dade County Public Schools for 17 years. She has a bachelor's and master's degrees from Florida International University. At her school, she is the Parent Trainer Coordinator for Citibank FamilyTech and is lead teacher of the dual language program. Recently, she was spotlighted in *The Miami Herald* as a Super Teacher for integrating technology in her Spanish lessons.

Miriam Gomez has been a Miami-Dade County Public Schools Media Specialist for 13 years. She is a National Board Certified Teacher and holds a master's degree. She is active in The Education Fund's Citibank FamilyTech, AT&T TeachNet, IMPACT II and Library Quest programs.



## Materials and Resources

Access to the Internet, a word processing program, and kidPix software is needed for slide presentations and a project board and Smart Board for the students' final presentation. Internet links and videos are essential.



Sponsored through a grant provided by Miami-Dade County's Department of Environmental Resources Management, Water and Sewer Department, and the Department of Solid Waste Management.

**"Teaching children to value and protect their water supply is an important investment in the future."**

*Rosa M. Sampedro & Miriam Gomez*

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Principal: Mattye Jones

# Com “post” with Us!

**A**fter learning about the environmental needs facing the world today, students become Waste Warriors to promote reducing, recycling and reusing in their community. A field trip to the Environmental Center and a recycling plant furthers students' understanding of the recycling process. Interactive DERM web lessons also aid in teaching the students. Armed with knowledge, the Waste Warriors then turn to action. They begin a paper recycling campaign by decorating boxes for each classroom's use. A Cartridge for Kids Club creates flyers, banners and posts information on the school's website to involve the community in their fundraising project that recycles cell phones and ink cartridges. To show students the complete recycling process, compost is made and used in a school garden that serves as a science and math lab.

## Students

This can be an individual club, classroom or school-wide project for grade 2-6 students. Low-performing students benefit the most from working in collaborative groups where everyone has an equally important role.



## Staff

Rosa Duarte has taught in MDCPS for 29 years. She holds a master's degree in ESE, specializing in autism. She is also an educational specialist in Computer Applications and has been a technology coordinator and webmaster since 1996. She teaches a journalism class that publishes the *Southside Express*. Ms. Duarte

participates in The Education Fund's Citibank FamilyTech, IMPACT II and Citibank Success Fund programs.

## Materials and Resources

Students need access to the Internet. A field trip to the Environmental Center is the key to the project.



Sponsored through a grant provided by Miami-Dade County's Department of Environmental Resources Management, Water and Sewer Department, and the Department of Solid Waste Management.

**“Through the use of technology and hands-on activities, students put into practice what they learn about recycling.”**

*Rosa Duarte*

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Principal: Maria S. Gonzalez

# Feed the Need: Bringing the Fields to Hungry Families

In this project, students learn the process of food recovery and empathy for those less fortunate. In addition, students faced with a food shortage can learn ways to obtain free, fresh food for their families. Students learn about malnutrition in America and how *Farm Share* recovers and distributes fresh and healthy foods to help alleviate it. *Farm Share* conducts produce recovery operations, gleaning projects, USDA commodity programs and food drives. Using truckloads and warehouse configurations as a practical application, students solve math problems to determine food pallet weights and space requirements. The unit includes 15 FCAT preparation activities in which students respond to reading comprehension passages and writing prompts and interpret data from graphs and tables. Service learning components that correlate to the lessons could include students organizing canned food drives or gleaning operations, and handing out or sorting food at a center.

## Students

Five fifth-grade classes participated in this project. Students spent two weeks learning about the process of food recovery. This project can be adapted for students in grade 4-8.

## Staff

Beth Davis is a National Board Certified Teacher and a member of the Florida League of Teachers. She was a Region Finalist for Teacher of

The Year and a state finalist for the Presidential Award for Teaching Science. She has taught for 19 years and has also been an adjunct at local universities. She has received The Education Fund's Citibank Success Fund and IMPACT II grants and a Teachers Network Leadership Institute fellowship in which she completed action

research on Teacher Collaboration. Her work is published by TS Denison and Instructional Fair.

## Materials and Resources

Classes can extend this program by taking a field trip to Farm Share's packing house. More information is available on Farm Share's web site: [www.farmshare.org](http://www.farmshare.org).



*Dedicated to the memory of R. Ray Goode, Ryder System Charitable Foundation, supporter of The Education Fund, civic leader and a champion of quality public education for all in Miami-Dade County.*

**“Motivate students to improve their math and problem-solving skills by incorporating civic responsibility into the curriculum.”**

*Beth Rosenthal Davis*

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Principal: Maria Pabellon

# Leaping Literacy: Books for the Neighborhood

Originally a Catherine Scripps Rodriguez Family Foundation Teacher Mini-Grant



In this service-learning project, students organize a penny drive for their school to buy books for children in the community. They design and create advertisements to encourage penny donations. Incentives are offered to classes collecting the most pennies. Students count the pennies and with the proceeds choose which books to buy. Student reviews of the books are laminated, along with the student photos, onto the cover of the book. These books are then presented to a shelter or clinic as a gift from the school. To extend their learning, the students can research the origin of the penny and learn about advertising design and multimedia presentations.

## Students

This project is handled well by a first-grade class, though it is easily adaptable to grades 2-12. Classes of varying achievement levels can accomplish the tasks involved; students who have lower functioning abilities will require more adult supervision.

## Staff

Ms. Kehrman Ramos is a first-grade teacher with six years of experience. She is also a storyteller and children's drama, art and music leader. Although paraprofessionals are extremely helpful, it can also be done with the occasional help of parents and other volunteers.



Collaboration with both the media specialist and the art teacher strengthen this project.

## Materials and Resources

Materials needed include plastic buckets, counting mats (for students in the lower grades), art supplies,

clear contact paper, a student-friendly camera with film, and prizes for penny collection winners. Guest speakers may include public relations and marketing personnel from community organizations who depend on fundraising for financial support.

*Sponsored by:*

## Florida Matching Grants Program

*“This project’s main value comes from its ability to help students see themselves as agents of positive change in their own community.”*

*Rachel E. Kehrman Ramos*

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# Linking Continents

Originally an Assurant Solutions Teacher Mini-Grant

This interdisciplinary study incorporates math, science, visual art, music, poetry and literature in the study of African American history from Africa to America. Student projects include a talk-show format to interview historical figures, a museum display to explain the cotton trade and the making of a quilt to tell the story of the Underground Railroad. It also includes a performance-based portfolio offering opportunities for students to reenact court cases, simulate experiences of slaves to better understand their feelings and emotions, and develop rap music that ties current issues with the past.

## Students

The project was developed using 62 eighth-grade Advanced History students in a block schedule, which gave students time to work on cooperative group assignments in class. In addition, students were given home learning assignments to be completed for the next class, as well as long-term projects.

## Staff

Millicent Taylor is a National Board Certified Teacher and holds a master's degree in elementary education. She has taught for 21 years and received several national, state and district awards including the Excellence in the Teaching of Economics, and the Florida Governor's Award, 1996 and 2000. In 1997, Ms. Taylor was the Miami-Dade County Social Studies Teacher of the Year. She is included

in Who's Who in American Education, Who's Who Among America's Teachers and in America's Registry of Outstanding Professionals. She received The Education Fund's Teacher Mini-Grant for this project which she has used for seven years. The art and language art teachers are also involved in this project.



## Materials and Resources

Materials needed are chart paper, markers, glitter, fabric, boxes, glue, DVDs, videos, and books. Field trips to the African-American museum, Goombay Festival and art shows are useful. Guest lecturers also enhance the project.

Sponsored by:



**"This project makes history come alive for students as they connect with the past through re-enactments, research and role playing."**

*Millicent Taylor*

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Principal: Kenneth Cooper

# Stitching History

To instill the sense of community of the quilting bees of old, this quilting project encourages parent involvement and student teamwork. After reading a book about a significant historical event, student groups decide what to portray on the individual squares that, when pieced together, will tell the complete story. Parents coordinate the project at weekly meetings, designing the color and fabric scheme and sewing the pieces together. The quilt instills in the students a sense of accomplishment for years to come as it is displayed at the school, where the students can show others and retell the historical story.

A social studies extension of the project that creates further bonding between the student families is the sharing of heritage and customs through family presentations and participation in a variety of cultural activities.

## Students

The project was used with kindergarten students but is applicable to all grade levels.

## Staff

Olga Dehghani is a 20-year veteran educator. She holds a bachelor's degree in Architecture from Florida International University and a master's degree in Elementary Education



from Barry University. She has also studied children's literature at La Universidad Complutense de Madrid in Spain. Her class received first place for their collage in the county-wide Hispanic Festival. She served as grade level chair for five years and is currently on the EESAC

committee. She has received an Adapter grant and a Citibank Success Fund grant from The Education Fund.

## Materials and Resources

A sewing machine (for teacher and parent use), scissors, a variety of fabrics and rulers are needed.

*Sponsored by:*

### Florida Matching Grants Program

*“This project facilitates a sense of belonging and accomplishment in students and parents and contributes to an invaluable positive educational experience for all.”*

*Olga Dehghani*

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Principal: Carlos Diaz

# Teachers Network Leadership Institute (TNLI)

*An Action Research Program of The Education Fund*



**T**he Teachers Network Leadership Institute (TNLI) is an action research initiative of more than 125 MetLife Fellows from 10 nationwide affiliates that connects education policy with actual classroom practice to improve student achievement. The mechanism ensures that education policy-making is informed by the realities of schools and classrooms.

TNLI empowers teachers as it trains them to utilize ongoing research to improve instruction and influence education policy decisions. Action research is a process teachers can use to analyze the effectiveness of their instruction through data collection, evaluation and reflection. Full-time classroom teachers research issues that affect their students and develop recommendations, document their work in papers and publications, and disseminate their work locally and nationally. To get the word out, teachers give presentations to school districts, school boards, national conferences and join influential task forces and advisory boards.

In 2003-2004, The Education Fund worked with the National Board Certified Teachers of Miami and Dr. Jill Farrell, Director, PhD and EdS Curriculum and Instruction Programs at Barry University, to expand the program locally to include monthly



meetings with intensive training in conducting action research as well as readings and discussions on the effectiveness of teaching strategies and practices. That school year seven NBCT teachers conducted action research in their classrooms and summaries of their projects appeared in the 2004-2005 Ideas with IMPACT catalog. For their completed research papers, you may contact the teachers individually or The Education Fund.

Last year's topics included:

- service learning
- habits of mind
- teaching social studies through art
- minorities and science
- critical thinking in mathematics
- training teachers in hands-on science
- learning communities

During the past school year, 2004-2005, eight MetLife Fellows conducted action research. Their research included:

- Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS)
- web-based tutorials
- nurturing interventions with at-risk students
- use of current events to develop critical thinking
- looping ESE students
- research process and reading comprehension
- and a collaborative teaching project to improve student observation and interpersonal skills.

These summaries appear on the following pages. Additional summaries from around the nation can be found at [www.teachersnetwork.org](http://www.teachersnetwork.org). If you would like to explore conducting research in your classroom – and receive a \$750 grant and graduate credits to do so—please see the application in the inserts of this catalog, contact The Education Fund at 305-892-5099, Ext. 18 or visit [www.educationfund.org](http://www.educationfund.org).

**What is the impact on fourth- and fifth-grade students' reading comprehension when the media specialist teaches them the research process? How will using the research process impact student skills with cause & effect and main idea?**

## Problem/Rationale

I became concerned that although our fourth- and fifth-grade students performed well on our state's writing test, these students seemed unable to use the same skills to read an article and write an extended response to questions. I took a course and attended conferences to learn how to infuse more research skills into the library media program by using online resources. Research shows that this will assist students in using critical thinking skills to broaden their knowledge.

While the teachers at my school were committed to the students, the main curriculum focus was to improve student scores on the FCAT in the spring. Teachers were totally focused on the reading curriculum. Other subject areas appeared to be set aside for the test. I wanted to collaborate with classroom teachers to demonstrate how they could work with the media specialist to infuse library information skills into their curriculum, teaching many subjects while having the students use the skills necessary to make gains on the test.

The school in which the research took place is part of a large urban school district located in a predominantly African-American community. The racial make-up is 91% Black and 9% Hispanic. Twenty-three fourth- and fifth-grade students participated in this action research project.

## Research

Wolf, Brush, and Saye (2003) found compelling evidence of a link between metacognitive skills (thinking about thinking) and the Big6 information problem-solving model. They found that the Big6 acts as a metacognitive scaffold for students to be successful in a variety of problem-solving learning activities. The Big6 can be applied to a variety of learning situations, both inside and outside the classroom. Teachers can use this and other information problem-solving models to systematically teach problem solving skills.



Joan Yoshina (1995-1997), library media specialist, was part of a team consisting of three teachers and Violet Harada, an associate professor at the University of Hawaii. Their action research showed that student progress can be assessed effectively as they worked through the Information Search Process by using journals, rubrics and process-folios.

This action research team is using its findings to improve current efforts and is working with other teachers in the school to integrate curricula. The results were also shared with educators in other schools at the district and state level.

## Data/Tools

Multiple data sources were used. The students took a computerized reading comprehension pretest, as well as a mock FCAT. The test shows that the students ranged in reading level from high first grade to seventh grade. The mock FCAT scores were also analyzed. I decided to focus on two comprehension skills: main idea and cause/effect. Lesson plans, attendance records, classroom teacher's grades, researcher observations, interviews, and student work were also used as data.

The fourth-grade students gained 0.27 grade equivalent on the STAR test in the semester before the project began. These same students gained 0.48 grade equivalent level during the project. The fourth-grade students also improved an average of 5.42 points on the mock FCAT.

The fifth-grade students who participated in the project gained an average 0.11 grade equivalent on the STAR test. They had gained an average 1.14 grade equivalent

during the semester before the project began. The fifth-grade students improved an average of 6.125 points on the fifth-grade Reading Standards Assessment test.

## Analysis

The research indicated that students made progress in reading comprehension. They also reported using the online resources with other projects and classes. They appeared more comfortable with these databases. For example, Alexis independently used Newsbank for Kids to look up and take notes on background information for her science fair project. The fifth-grade students did experience a drop on their STAR test; however, their total average gains for the school year were about the same as their school peers who did not participate in the project.

## Policy Recommendations

These fourth- and fifth-grade students enjoyed doing projects on the computer. Training in the use of the research process for both teachers and students is essential in order to integrate reading comprehension into the content area. Collaboration between classroom teachers and the media specialist should be encouraged and supported.

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## How will use of the Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) methodology, combined with other writing strategies, support and impact the writing of third-grade students?

### Problem/Rationale

One-third of my class was identified in the lowest 25 percent of the third-grade population in reading. Communication and visual literacy skills were a challenge for this underachieving population. They had difficulty articulating observations and ideas, as well as listening to and considering those of others. I wanted to give students the opportunity to develop their speech, writing and listening abilities to improve their reading comprehension. Research shows a definite relationship between writing and reading. Reading is critical to the promotion of third-grade students.

I wanted to address the development of communication skills, so I implemented the Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS), developed by Yenawine and Housen, in collaboration with a local university professor. VTS focuses on the development of critical thinking and observational skills through the use of open-ended questioning techniques using visual art images.

### Background/Context

Myrtle Grove Elementary School is a pre-K through fifth-grade school located in a lower socio-economic community in Opa-Locka, Florida with an ethnic breakdown of 92% Black Non-Hispanic, 1% White Non-Hispanic, 1% Asian/Indian/Multiracial and 6% Hispanic. Approximately 93.3% of the 638 students receive free or reduced-price lunches. Myrtle Grove Elementary's student population is extremely transient in nature and is derived largely from single-parent homes, including students in foster care and homes where grandparents are the heads of household. Students need extra help in mastering skills and require close supervision and redirection. Therefore, several tutorial programs and flexible scheduling have been established to provide additional assistance.

This study was implemented in my third-grade class, consisting of 21 students, some of whom were identified as gifted, learning disabled, or speech impaired. One-third of the students had been retained the previous year and five of the students looped with me from the previous year.



### Research

- Research validates the use of art as a stimulus for developing critical thinking skills. (Eisner, Eliot. *Educating Artistic Vision*. 1997. The Macmillan Company)
- The development and theory of Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS), as Phillip Yenawine states, is based on several antecedent educational theories. (Yenawine, Phillip. *Theory into Practice: The Visual Thinking Strategies*. Presented at the conference of "Aesthetic and Art Education: A Transdisciplinary Approach," sponsored by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Service of Education. September 27-29, 1999, Lisbon Portugal. [www.vue.org](http://www.vue.org))
- Research shows that students can improve their ability to articulate thoughts and their problem solving skills. (Longhenry, Susan. *Thinking Through Art at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts*. School Arts Magazine. Volume 104, Number 7, March 2005.)

### Data/Tools

The Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) methodology uses art to teach visual literacy, critical thinking, and communication skills. Through a series of 10 lessons facilitated by Dr. Jill Farrell of Barry University, students looked at and thought about art images representative of diverse time periods, artistic styles and cultures. Each lesson lasted forty-five minutes to one hour and used three images. The lessons were taught two to three weeks apart and were followed by writing and drawing activities. Students examined art of increasing complexity, responded to developmentally based questions, and participated in group discussions to stimulate growth.

Writing is one way to obtain concrete evidence of what the students are learning from VTS discussions. Pre/Progress and Post-Writing assessments evidenced the students'

growth. Attendance records, audiotapes, videotapes, direct observations, work samples of writing and drawing, collaborative conversations, student and teacher reflections, standardized test scores, and lesson plans were also used. Each VTS lesson was analyzed.

During the untimed post-writing assessment, students wrote about one of the images shown in the VTS Student's Web site. They selected the picture they wanted to write about and responded in writing to the prompt, "What's going on in this picture?" The writing rubric, designed to assess critical thinking skills, was developed from the assessment pathmarker designed by Visual Understanding in Education (VUE), for classroom teachers implementing VTS.

### Analysis

Visual Thinking Strategies significantly increased all students' visual literacy and aesthetic development, ensured maximum participation, and developed a democratic relationship among the participants. Writing samples provided evidence of growth in language skills and thinking. Seventy-one percent of the lowest 25% of students showed improvement in their reading skills as evidenced by the state standardized test. Eighty-five percent showed significant learning gains.

### Policy Recommendations

This study indicates that students should be provided with the opportunity to participate in arts-based instructional strategies. It revealed a number of policy implications which could benefit students' writing skills through the arts:

- Time and funding is needed to provide training in Visual Thinking Strategies for all teachers in low-performing schools.
- There should be a greater emphasis on integrating the arts throughout the curriculum in order to promote the development of aesthetic thinking in all students.
- More opportunities should be provided for collaboration between classroom teachers, university faculty and community resources.

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**What impact does looping with second- to third-grade Exceptional Education students have on their reading abilities (in the areas of fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension) and self-esteem?**

## Problem/Rationale

Exceptional Student Education (ESE) has evolved dramatically over the past two decades. These changes are due to the growing concern that traditional, isolated educational approaches to teaching students with disabilities were failing in U. S. public schools. Typically, students with disabilities perform poorly in school (particularly in the area of reading), have low self-esteem and low graduation rates. These negative outcomes of ESE programs have resulted in a paradigm shift that has impacted federal and state laws. These laws now require that students with disabilities be included in the general education classroom, a practice called inclusion.

As a second-year inclusion teacher, I have been interested in the impact the inclusive setting has on my elementary students with disabilities. This study was conducted in a third-grade classroom at a large, Title 1 inner-city public school in Miami-Dade County, Florida. This study focuses on five ESE students, four of whom are identified as having a specific learning disability (LD), and one of whom is identified as educably mentally handicapped (EMH). All of the students are minorities. Four of the students have English as a second language (ESL) and have been exited from the program for English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). All of the students qualify for the government-run free or reduced-price lunch program and therefore represent a low socioeconomic level.

## Research

Exceptional student education has evolved over the past four decades (Henderson, 2001, Ormrod, 2000) in response to alarming trends that have developed: students with disabilities performing poorly in school (specifically in reading) (Vacca & Vacca, 2002); having low self-esteem (Bielinski & Ysseldyke, 2000, Gross 1997); and low graduation rates (Ross-Kidder, 2002). Inclusion is one way educators and lawmakers are trying to remedy these problems. The premise of inclusion maintains that the general education classroom is the best educational environment



for most students with disabilities (Ormrod, 2000). Specific teaching strategies and practices are used in inclusive classrooms to help students with disabilities achieve high educational goals and develop a sense of belonging (Hall & McGregor, 2000, Schwartz, 2000). Looping is one of these practices and refers to a teacher and a group of students remaining together for two or more years. One of the intended benefits of looping is for students with disabilities to create bonds with the teacher as well as with other students (Chaskin & Rauner, 1995, Gilles & Ashman, 2000, Kohn, 1993). It is hoped that bonding will increase the self-esteem of the students, which will result in higher academic achievements.

## Data/Tools

The data sources analyzed include standardized tests, norm-referenced tests, the Woodcock Johnson IQ assessment, the Houghton Mifflin informal reading inventory, the goals on the students' individualized education plans (IEP), interviews with the ESE teacher, and a personal journal. The findings from the data collected for this study have been validated using triangulation of the data instruments.

## Analysis

In order to analyze the data collected for this study, I organized the information into four categories reflecting changes in reading fluency, reading vocabulary, reading comprehension, and self-esteem. The results of this study revealed patterns indicating that looping with ESE students in inclusive settings has a positive impact on all of the aforementioned categories. In addition, an unexpected pattern of higher expectations set by both the general

education teacher and the ESE teacher was revealed through data analysis.

## Policy Recommendations

Implications of the findings of this study include modifications for the implementation of inclusion programs in schools. The data supports that the practice of looping in inclusion classes results in high achievement for students with disabilities and high self-esteem. Therefore, I recommend the implementation of looping practices more often in inclusive settings. In addition, I recommend further research in the area of best practices in inclusive settings.

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**How will the use of current events in a ninth-grade Leadership Skills class impact students' critical thinking skills, attitudes in science, and performance?**

## Problem/Rationale

One trend educators keep mentioning in the halls and workrooms is student apathy. Educators refer to the increasing number of students who shrug their shoulders and make comments like, "So what?" or "Who cares?" Students have apathy towards their learning and their grades, and do not see the connection between what they have learned in school and the world around them. In the past three years, I have recognized this as a growing trend with my students. My school is an urban school with 3,300 students. The ethnicity breakdown is 70% Hispanic, 28% Black, 1% White, and 1% Other, with 65% of the students on free or reduced-price lunch.

The particular class I used for this research was added when the district extended our day and added this class to the last hour of school. Students were distressed by the requirement to stay in school an extra hour and take an additional class. These students had low motivation, and it was therefore a perfect class to try my intervention. I used current events in my daily lessons in order to establish a clear connection between the curriculum and the real world. Some of the current events were drawn from video recordings of news stories; others were print articles from USA Today, The Miami Herald, Popular Science, and Discover. After viewing or reading the piece, students had to respond to questions and write their own questions using Bloom's Taxonomy.

## Research

There was an extensive amount of research available on classroom questioning and the relationship between teacher questioning and student achievement. The focuses of the research were: strategies to improve student thinking and comprehension, placement and timing of questions, cognitive levels of questions, wait-time, redirection, reinforcement, and probing. Research that focused on the connection between questioning and student attitudes as well as research that used current events and questioning strategies were nonexistent. Several articles made general statements regarding making connections; however, they lacked a specific manner in which to accomplish this.

## Data/Tools

I administered a pre- and post-attitudinal survey with regard to science. I compared their Student Reading Inventory Scores from May 2004 to May 2005. I collected samples of their questions and answers throughout. I kept a journal of anecdotal comments made by students in the class.

## Analysis

My analysis indicated an increase in students making a connection between the subject matter and their lives as well as their personal confidence. There was little change in students' perceptions of their teacher's attitude. Students made statements indicating to me that my intervention was having some positive impact, even though it was not immediately quantifiable. With regard to science being in the male domain, the students' responses remained mostly unchanged. Students' ability to write questions improved as they used and became familiar with Bloom's Taxonomy. Students' willingness and ability to respond to questions that used Bloom's hierarchy increased with repeated use and familiarity, however, the progress lagged behind the ability to write questions.

## Policy Recommendations

This research indicates the need for students to have quality instruction that connects the real world to the academic world. Additionally, students and teachers must be trained in the practice of developing quality questions and answers. Moreover, teachers need time to develop these lessons in order to incorporate them accurately. Therefore, teachers should have at least one planning period and one progress monitoring/data analysis period per day.

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**Can it be too late for teacher-directed, child-centered, nurturing interventions to positively impact fifteen underachieving, at-risk sixth-grade students' motivation to learn (academic achievement)?**

## Problem/Rationale

Should there be a place for moral education in today's middle school? What is learning? Is there an age and developmental stage when social learning is most beneficial to young people?

Last school year, my fifth-grade homeroom students all achieved FCAT scores for mathematics and reading in percentages below what is determined Level One. Severely low scholastic achievement and deficient social dispositions locked my students into recurring failure at school. The students in my class focused (in varying degrees) on conversations with one another, complaints, insults among themselves, and negative attitudes such as disgust. They avoided teacher and school authority but admired students being reported to administration for breaking rules; students reported for defiance to authority, fights, name calling and anger towards one another; and students reported for lack of attempt at home learning (homework).

My students were fortunate to attend an elementary school, so their first year of middle school expectations still provided them a self-contained homeroom experience with one teacher, along with a familiar school environment of administrative leadership, schoolmates and friends.

## Research

Middle school education is the critical link in dropout prevention for at-risk, disadvantaged students. Abraham Maslow's Needs Gratification theory is built on the premise that each stage of needs has to be satisfied before an individual is able to go forward psychologically, emotionally, and socially to meet the next stages of needs, and to finally become a self-actualized, creative person. Disadvantaged, at-risk students are usually identified because their needs for 1) clothing, shelter, 2) safety, protection, 3) sense of belonging, 4) love, friendship, affection, 5) self-esteem, and 6) self-actualization are denied, compromised or unmet in some way. As such, young learners are unable to progress satisfactorily to achieve scholastic learning success.



Middle school years encompass a time when adolescent, pubescent teens have to face growth and developmental bodily changes. A less personal school environment, stresses of challenging curricular management, numerous teachers and time periods, in addition to their dependence on peers' acceptance (peer pressure) all present challenges for sixth-grade students.

## Data/Tools

FCAT test scores, teacher observations, student surveys, interviews and seating charts were all studied for data regarding this action research project. I wrote two grants for my students. One used literature anthologies to grow their vocabulary, comprehension, fluency, memorization and FCAT writing strategies. The other focused on teaching *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens* and community responsibility as they worked with first graders. Implementation and observation of these grants, as well as focused use of time on their grade-level curriculum, were also specific tools used to guide these students toward academic and social achievements.

## Analysis

Fifty percent of the class moved from Level 1 to Level 3 in the FCAT Mathematics test. In addition, all students increased their FCAT reading scores, with increases ranging from 54 to 762 points. Students developed personal initiative during the year: they choose to study poems on their own and they prepared stories and treats for their first-grade reading buddies. The interventions also increased classroom morale and students'

self worth. One 12-year-old student wrote, "Thank you for *The 7 Habits of Effective Teens* book. I am learning about win-win and having a good attitude. I'm not getting into trouble and I don't have to go to the office anymore."

## Policy Recommendations

Could it be that because these at-risk, disadvantaged students, who struggle with personal and social needs as well as the need for academic gains, have chosen to focus on the satisfaction of the more emotionally pleasing social need? My major recommendation is for legislators, school boards and schools to provide middle school students nurturing environments with subject-specific, challenging curriculum. Support of high teacher certification programs such as National Board for Professional Teaching Standards is also needed. In addition, time should be provided in a teacher's workday for collaboration in learning communities because the *teacher in a classroom still makes a difference* in the social development and academic gains for each and every student.

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## How does experience in Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) affect the critical thinking skills of the student when communicating about their own artwork? How can the art teacher support the classroom teacher to identify or track transfer of VTS skills?

### Problem/Rationale

Third-grade students with learning disabilities and who have been retained have weak abilities in observational skills; creating a context and providing an interpretation of their visual experience; and communicating about their experience. Visual art can serve as a focus for observation, interpretation and discussion about student experience. VTS methodology, developed by Phillip Yenawine and Abigail Housen, is based on questioning. "The teacher asks open-ended questions, adding more probing ones later." "Facilitation stresses expansive, reflective observation and thought as the desired behaviors." (Yenawine, Phillip)

### Background/Context

I am an art teacher at Charles D. Wyche Jr. Elementary School, which is located in a suburban setting of lower middle-class homes and apartments. This study was implemented in a single third-grade class of twenty students who have learning disabilities and have been retained. They are ethnically, socioeconomically, linguistically, and cognitively diverse. This study occurred once per week for one hour.



### Research

Research has shown the validity of using art as a stimulus for developing critical thinking skills. "Art can serve as a starting point for analysis, stimulating the experience of the individual. The student's analysis of an artwork can develop their perceptual and interpretive abilities as they identify the image structure and respond based on their experience." (Eisner, Eliot. *Educating Artistic Vision*. 1997. The Macmillan Company)

*The development and theory of Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS), as Phillip Yenawine states, is based on several antecedent educational theories.* "Peers exert greater influence than parents on the shaping of young people's characters and personalities." (Judith Rich Harris) "Through interactions with people and the environment, children slowly evolve a series of ways of understanding what they perceive." (Jean Piaget) "Understanding involves active construction through exploration and reflection. Effective learning, the development of operations that enable an individual continuously to make meaning of new circumstances and use new information, is a slow process." (Lev Vygotsky) (Yenawine, Phillip. *Theory into Practice: The Visual Thinking Strategies*. Presented at the conference of "Aesthetic and Art Education: A Transdisciplinary Approach," sponsored by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Service of Education. September 27-29, 1999, Lisbon Portugal. [www.vue.org](http://www.vue.org).)

*VTS curriculum is currently being implemented in public schools.* In a partnership between the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Boston Public Schools, and Visual Understanding in Education, VTS methodology is being implemented to improve elementary student learning skills. Students improved in their abilities to articulate their thoughts and in problem solving skills. (Longhenry, Susan. *Thinking Through Art at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts*. School Arts Magazine. Volume 104, Number 7, March 2005.)

### Data/Tools

Students viewed and discussed VTS-prescribed art images in approximately ten 45-minute sessions, implemented over an eighteen-week period of art classes. Oral discussion was collected through audiotapes of class discussion. Anecdotal teacher-written observations supplemented the assessment tools. A written and drawing interpretation of student artwork was implemented in the beginning, middle, and end of the implementation period. An assessment of student abilities to observe, communicate details,

and interpret artwork was analyzed by employing an assessment rubric of student behaviors in an analysis of student oral discussion, written narrative, and drawing. Instances of assessed behaviors were tabulated and graphed to illustrate the number and frequency of the behaviors.

### Analysis

Several factors influenced the outcomes of the students' critical thinking and communication behaviors, including the students' prior knowledge/experience, classroom culture, the physical setting, training in VTS strategies by student and the facilitator, and implementation time. For example, the group dynamics influenced the student's ability to focus and communicate their thinking orally. Some students were inhibited due to fear of being judged by peers. Others had difficulty maintaining focus on the image or the conversation over time. Additionally, the homeroom teacher and art teacher did not collaborate in the implementation of the VTS strategy in the regular classroom setting.

During a museum visit, student analysis blossomed; their conversation with a docent revealed a newfound comfort in their analysis of artwork. Based on these factors, the quality of responses and students' comfort in participating varied. Students who consistently engaged in the activities did show development in their abilities to articulate detail and interpretation in the artwork of others and their own artwork.

### Policy Recommendations

VTS strategies can be an effective method of developing student critical thinking and could be integrated into the instructional strategies of all curricula. Students need a collaborative classroom culture that is supportive of VTS instructional strategies. Teacher training must be consistent and supported by the school culture, providing training time as well as interdisciplinary and cross-curricular collaboration and planning. Students need more experience in sharing conversation and valuing each other's thinking.

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## What happens to mathematical achievement scores when fifth-grade students and their parents interact in an after-school, Web-enhanced tutorial program?

### Problem/Rationale

There is no denying that computer technology is here to stay. It is one of the innovations that creates interactive learning activities and gives educators some additional help in reaching individual students. Several fifth-grade, low-achieving math students become engaged in learning mathematical skills and strategies only while using computer-based tutorial programs. Our elementary school is located in a low- to middle-income community. Some parents have expressed their desire to become more involved in helping their children, but do not know where to begin. Many of the children had computers at home, so it was likely that parents and children would utilize the tutorial program to practice mathematical skills. Furthermore, while the students interact with the Web-enhanced subject area in an entertaining mode, the educator has the capabilities of peering into the students' achievement files, which keep accurate records of students' scores as they continuously move from one activity to another.

### Research

According to Miami-Dade County Schools' Department of Instructional Technology, it is mandated that K-6 students be given a prescribed amount of computer learning time, from 10 to 90 minutes, with some teacher interaction. In reference to the use

of computer technology in the classroom, there is a mindset that commitment is a critical component for the process to be beneficial. In an article for Childhood Education, Lilia C. Dibello (2005) states: "All of the parties involved in the process must make a commitment to provide better technology access to all populations. Administrators must emphasize the benefits of employing technology. Teachers must understand the need for incorporating technology in meaningful ways. Students must commit to learning and employing technology in appropriate ways. Parents must be willing to support the changes and the need for access to technology at home as well."

### Data/Tools

Math attitude surveys revealed that many of the students liked math, realized its importance, understood their own lack of proficiency and were very receptive to participating in an after-school, Web-enhanced tutorial program. Parent surveys revealed that about 60% of the parents did not like math but 100% of them responded favorably to learning a computer-enhanced math program. This offered some indication about their children's lack of success in mathematics and warranted further study. At the same time, the responses strengthened my belief that parents have an innate desire to help their children in their educational endeavors. Since the student's mathematical achievement was the basis for this research project, it was important to review the students' quarterly grade-level math test (See graph). The graph shows the improvement of each student's math scores. Overall there was an average gain of about 9.2% for the students' fourth grading period math scores.

### Analysis

It is very important to stress how similar the Web-based tutorials were to the exercises that are used in the classroom. The programs were both student and teacher friendly, easily accessible and provided skills that meet state educational standards. Parental involvement was not required, but their input was vital, as they sent information on how the student performed on their math home learning assignments. All students involved showed great interest in learning and practicing new math skills and strategies.

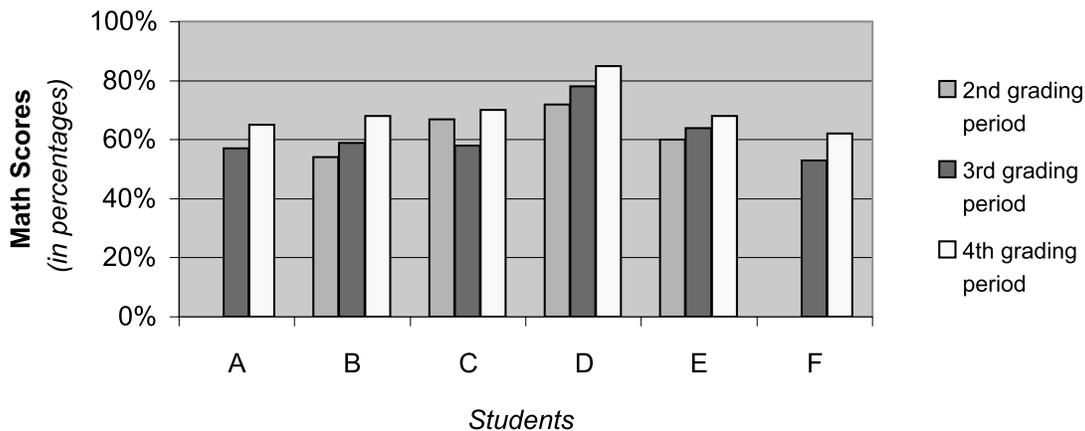
### Policy Recommendations

The limited number of computers in the classroom was a hindrance to my study. Each student was required to do individual work that involved forty-five minutes of uninterrupted computer time. It is very important that administrators and classroom teachers continue the dialogue with the district to increase the number of computers in the classroom. The Web-based tutorial can be very beneficial to the educator who needs extra help in reaching the students who are failing mathematics.

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Average Math Grades



**How will the use of various instructional approaches in a collaborative community of learners impact the ability of fifth grade students to make detailed observations and work appropriately in a cooperative group?**

## Background/Context

Myrtle Grove Elementary School is a pre-kindergarten through fifth-grade school. Its ethnic breakdown is 92% Black Non-Hispanic, 6% Hispanic, 1% White Non-Hispanic and 1% Asian/Indian/Multiracial and 93% of the school population qualifies for free or reduced-price lunches. Myrtle Grove Elementary School was identified as a participant in the School Improvement Zone at the beginning of the 2004-2005 school year. There are 39 "Zone" schools in Miami-Dade County and these schools were selected as a result of being chronically low and/or underperforming. These schools have a number of differences from non-"Zone" schools, but the most significant are the extension of the school day by one hour and extension of the 2004-2005 school year by five days.

Two of the four teachers who collaborated in this study were mid-year transfers to the school. The two are both National Board Certified and taught fifth grade, one in the Gifted Center and one in a newly created science laboratory. They transferred, in part, to be able to work together. The other two participating teachers were long-term members of the faculty, members of the school's Professional Development Team and commonly accepted school leaders who taught fifth-grade mathematics and computer applications.

## Problem/Rationale

The newly transferred teachers noticed a striking lack of ability of the students to make detailed and accurate observations. The students also demonstrated very poor interpersonal skills in academic activities that required cooperation among group members. These observations served as an opportunity to involve the veteran teachers of the school in a collaborative project to address deficiencies identified in the students.

## Data/Tools

In order to address student challenges in observation and interpersonal skills, the four



teachers initiated their own unique strategies according to the context of their individual classrooms.

The mathematics teacher chose to address the issue of group interactions. He overtly taught specific interpersonal skills and experimented with various group configurations in order to determine the root causes and solutions to difficulty in group interactions.

The computer teacher worked with the students on both their observational skills and their interpersonal skills, and overtly taught students appropriate ways to interact. The teacher of Gifted students and the science teacher both worked on observational skills and interpersonal skills while working in a group setting. They overtly taught the skills necessary to interact in a group setting and to make observations. They made detailed observations about student performance in both areas.

The science teacher also utilized a specific set of strategies called Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) that uses art to teach visual literacy, critical thinking and communication skills. While the entire protocol of VTS was not utilized, the specific nature of the protocol and its use warrants mention here.

Data used to evaluate observation skills came from student work samples, teacher observations and student reflections. Data sources for interactions in a group were teacher observations, student performance and student reflections.

## Analysis

The overt teaching of observational skills and interpersonal skills while working in a group by a collaborative community of learners had an overwhelmingly positive impact on student performance. Students showed

tremendous improvements in the detail and quality of their observations in a variety of contexts. Even greater impacts were seen on the ability of students to interact appropriately in a group setting. The collaborative nature of the teaching approach, as well as presenting the students opportunities to practice these skills in a variety of contexts, resulted in marked improvements in student skills and performance.

## Policy Recommendations

Working in groups helps students develop communication skills, observational skills and social interaction skills. Teachers should overtly teach students how to work appropriately in groups. There should be standards that state this objective.

Just as students must be able to work in groups so, too, must their teachers. Time for teachers to collaborate on issues of mutual interest and importance should be scheduled into the regular working day.

The ability to make detailed observations can be crucial in determining success in any given venture. Teachers should be trained in protocols that will assist them in teaching observational skills.

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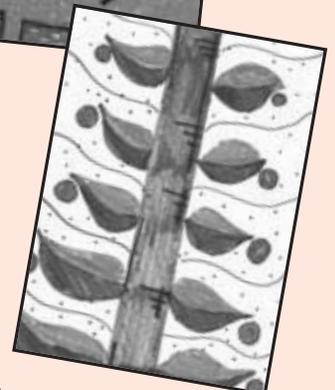
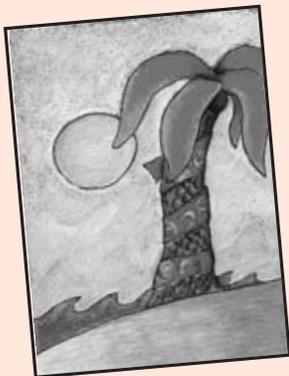
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## Holiday and Note Cards

Looking for just the right card to send for the holidays or let your friends know you are thinking about them? The Education Fund's Card Program offers a variety of cards – with artwork created by MDCPS students.

Go to [www.educationfund.org/cards.html](http://www.educationfund.org/cards.html) to find out more.



## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SERVICES FOR NEW AND EARLY CAREER TEACHERS!

**\* NEW TEACHER HELPLINE - where support is only one call away! 305-995-7888**

- Professional learning courses designed specifically for new and early career teachers



- New Educator Support Team mentoring sessions - focused mentoring and support provided by National Board Certified Teachers
- Project GATE - Providing mentoring and support to new Exceptional Student Education teachers
- The Retired Teacher Mentoring Project - linking highly-skilled retired teachers with new teachers in need of a classroom-based mentor
- The New Educator - M-DCPS' monthly electronic newsletter for new teachers, with helpful articles and columns
- New Teacher Center/Mathematica Policy Research New Teacher Mentoring Study

### COMING SOON -

*E-Nest* - providing access to virtual mentors, threaded discussions, and online communities of learning for new teachers

*Online New Teacher Toolkits* - a variety of online resources and opportunities for new teachers! Anytime, anywhere access to research-based strategies and suggestions designed to support early career teachers

# COMPANIES WITH IMPACT

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## PLATINUM STAR



**Florida Matching  
Grants Program**

## GOLD STAR



*Miami-Dade County's Department of  
Environmental Resources Management  
Water and Sewer Department  
Department of Solid Waste Management.*



## SILVER STAR



**The William J. and  
Tina Rosenberg  
Foundation**

## BRONZE STAR

**Citrix**

**Original Impressions, LLC**

**Yamaha Contender Miami Billfish Tournament**



Support Public Schools in Miami-Dade County

# BUY THE EDUCATION LICENSE PLATE!

When you buy the Education License Plate in Miami-Dade County you are donating \$20 directly to The Education Fund.

This money will be used for special programs that tax dollars just can't cover – things like classroom grants, equipment and books for school libraries, student scholarships, and this publication.

In other words, the money raised in Miami-Dade County stays in Miami-Dade County for the benefit of Miami-Dade County Public Schools students.

Call your local automobile tag agency for the total cost and instructions on how to receive your Education Plate by mail or in person. The Florida Education License Plate can be purchased at your local tag agency, whether your tags are up for renewal or not. Just mention the plate with the apple and the pencil.

To find out more about the Education License Plate, visit  
<http://www.hsmv.state.fl.us/specialtytags/SLP.html>  
and look for the "Florida Educational" plate

To locate an auto tag agency near you, visit:  
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or look in the yellow pages under  
**Tags**



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To register online, visit [www.educationfund.org/expo.html](http://www.educationfund.org/expo.html)