

Sunday, April 30, 2006

## News Nuggets

### Congress wants to Ban Junk Food in Schools

The obesity rate of students jumped four percent, from 14% to 18%, in four years, according to the Centers for Disease Control. (No need to document this, we all see for ourselves that this is true. But, here is the supporting link.)

<http://tinyurl.com/hazdz> While the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee (I'm not making this "Forestry" part up) ponders the danger of close to 1/5 of our children being on the brink of long-term health problems, we should wonder how so many high-sugar, high-salt, high-fat, caffeine-laced "food stuffs" get into our schools in the first place. Second, we should wonder if schools are the only place that our kids get to eat this stuff?

Consider a study in NYC that determined that 25% of toddlers are obese and that 40% are too heavy for their age. This issue was most acute among children from lower socioeconomic homes. Why?

<http://tinyurl.com/lkty5>

Then, we should wonder "who's job it is to teach children what to eat?"

And finally, we might ask "Does lack of exercise also play a part in this problem?" (That is, unless we belong to the Food Products Association, and believe that non-nutritive food stuffs [no pun intended] has to be present in schools so that children can learn right from wrong [about eating].)

Maybe "No Child Left Behind" means that they are too heavy to run and can't keep up.

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Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in News Nuggets at 11:00

## Short Article

### NCLB and High-stakes Tests: "We Spit on You"

(Please excuse the gross language)

News Item:

Spit Test Spots Child's Stress -- Could children's saliva hold clues to their anxieties about relationships with parents or teachers?

Fri Apr 28, 11:53 PM ET

FRIDAY, April 28 (HealthDay News) This article notes that a simple saliva test could provide clues about children's anxieties. The article notes that... "a stress-linked enzyme, alpha amylase, is a marker for the sympathetic nervous system's (SNS) "fight or flight" response." <http://tinyurl.com/enx23>

One quote in particular should have raised red flags about what we are doing to our children with the emphasis upon high-stakes testing.

"Examples of social stressors used in the research included babies being gently restrained by a stranger and older children being asked to complete a frustrating task or being evaluated."

<http://tinyurl.com/enx23>

So, high-stakes tests appear to be a double-whammy for our students, i.e., 1.) a frustrating task and 2.) an evaluation.

"Being able to monitor alpha amylase via a salivary test may open new opportunities to characterize individual differences in response to stress that we weren't able to see before. We think that these differences could prove to be meaningful in understanding behavior," Dr. Douglas A. Granger, associate professor of biobehavioral health and human development and family studies at Penn State University, said in a prepared statement.

<http://tinyurl.com/enx23>

Perhaps our elected officials and bureaucratic decision-makers can't see the handwriting on the wall, but they could find the evidence of the error of their test-crazed ways on the floor and in bathroom sinks through enzyme markers in the spit of our over-stressed students.

We have toyed with the idea of a Web site and a SpitonNCLB movement, but have not decided whether we want to be associated with such a gross campaign.

Basically, everyone could send a 3"x5" card with the name, age, city and state of each student that is stressed by the excesses of the high-stakes test movement to their senators, congressional representative. A card to Margaret Spellings, Secretary of Education, and to President Bush might also be useful.

If we could trust this process, and believed that such cards wouldn't spread a Bird Flu (or another pandemic), we might move forward with the idea. Each card could contain a sample of spittle from each stressed student (allowed to dry, of course). But such cards might endanger postal workers and congressional staff workers, without ever being seen by our representatives.

Perhaps, instead, we could create a virtual SpitonNCLB movement, where symbolic stress-level E-mail messages are delivered to our lawmakers.

Our politicians have to be out-of-touch when on one hand, they build a high-stress environment for our children and their teachers; then, on the other hand, bemoan that their stressed victims are getting fat.

Although NCLB-inflicted stress is not the sole cause of stress in our schools, its negative effects are pervasive and detrimental.

Ridding our schools of a bad law will leave a vacuum in vision that can be filled by the leadership of teachers, not politicians.

A law that began as a backdoor method to provide vouchers for private schools has subverted educational common sense. Our students don't need the added stress of this high-stakes testing mania, testing that would not be justified, even if the NCLB law stood a "snowball's chance" of improving education.

Let's see how the SpitonNCLB movement evolves in the next few weeks.

Any ideas?

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Short Article at 10:00

## Feature Article

The Stripes, Spots, and Yellow Streaks of School District Stakeholders

Project managers like to tout their skill in building buy-in among the stakeholders of a project.

Stakeholders are those people who have a stake in the project's success. These people could be anyone who touches (or is impacted by) the project in any way.

Scenario #1:  
When the Scenario #1 process is working in a flawed manner, for example, a director decides to implement a new math program, district-wide. A salesperson visited, provided slick brochures, a CD, maybe even a luncheon and a high-pitched sales presentation.

Anyway, the director is "sold" and decides to use "left-over" federal funds to purchase the program. Then, at the start of the next school year, teachers receive training in how to add this supplemental and expensive set of materials to their math classes.

Of course, this is backwards from how this should work, and the implementation of the materials meets with resistance...some subtle, some not so subtle. After a year, no one is using the materials, and the director begins to sweat, a cold sweat fueled by fear. Someone might find out that the project was a complete flop.

Scenario #2:

This time, a new salesperson with another set of materials visits with teachers (maybe a committee) to build buy-in. Teachers are promised better student scores, access to add-on technology (CDs), and high student interest. Every question that teachers ask is met with a slick redirect, and the sales person, they call him or her the "Closer" overcomes every question that teachers have.

Results: This initiative begins to march in step to the roll out of Scenario #1, and the results are about the same.

After a year, the salesperson visits the district, driving in a new luxury European sedan, and selling a new product.

Scenario #3:

The superintendent puts out the word that directors and principals should look favorably on the products of one particular company. But, the superintendent is very busy, and absent mindedly omits the fact that the salesperson from that company is a brother-in-law.

Wanting to "score points" with the superintendent, principals and directors trip over each other in their scramble to be the first to impress the superintendent with the quantity of their knowledge as measured through the size of their order.

When minimal, even negative results, result; no culpable individual wants to bring accountability measures to the table; and the de facto conspiracy of silence is the traditional group response.

Scenario #4: (Note: This scenario is so pervasive that it is often thought of as standard operating procedure.)

Budgets are devised from a fixed-pot mentality. Folks scramble to spend the money that they were assigned to use last year, making rush-to-spend misjudgments, and avoiding contact with knowledgeable front-line workers (such as teachers) while making purchasing decisions.

Common wisdom dictates that unspent budget money will be taken back the next year, and money cannot be "rolled over." This means that budget managers cannot save up for complex, multi-year projects, and that projects generally must conform to fiscal year time frames. A corollary to this is that most budgets, most projects and many grants are under funded in educational bureaucracies.

Here is what actually affects a project (each allowance should be budgeted):

Estimated cost

Allowance for price increases from the time of proposal until the time of project approval

Allowance for items missed in the original estimation

Allowance for things going wrong

Allowance for additional benefits to be added as they show up to make the project stronger

What is actually budgeted?:

Arbitrary amount of estimated cost, say 80%

Let's say that you pad the project proposal's budget so that you can account for some of the allowances, say 10%.

Then, when the decision-makers cut the project budget by 20% you end up with a project that is 12% short of funds.

Here is the math:

Original project cost:

Actual Amount = 100%

Budget Request = \$100

Padding for allowances:

Padding Multiplier = 10%

Padded Budget Request = \$110

Arbitrary Funding Approval

Project Arbitrary Funding = 80%

Actual Funding Amount = \$88

Actual Shortfall

Actual Shortfall = 12%

Underfunded Amount = \$12

What is pervasive is that legitimate education (and bureaucratic) projects tend to be under funded and under resourced.

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Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Featured Article at 09:00

## Quick Tips

Teacher Wide and SchoolWide

Teacher Wide.Com

TeacherWide is a sales site for books for elementary students, to grade 6. The design of the site make it easy to find books of various categories: Activity and Coloring Books

Author Collections

Award Winners

Bargain Bundles

Bonus Points Rewards

Books Grades 2-3

Books Grades 4-5

Books Grades 6-8

Books Grades K-1

Books Made Into Movies

Books W/Cassette

Classroom Supplies

Clearance

Concepts

Fairy Tales And Folk Tales

Fantasy and Adventure

Favorite Characters

High Interest Low Readability

Holiday Books

Learning To Read

Leveled Books

Mathematics And Counting

Memoir and Personal Narrative

Multicultural

Mystery/Horror

Nonfiction

Poetry

Read-Alouds

RIF Books  
Science  
Series Books  
Social Studies  
Spanish Books  
Sports Books  
Student-Run Bookstore Specials  
Summer Reading  
Teaching Resources  
Toys and Puzzles

Writing Workshop The clearance items listed many books for less than \$1, and many others for less than \$2. The parent site, SchoolWide, offers theme-based books for older students.

Teacher Wide.Com

One particular service that may be of interest to elementary schools is the Student Run Bookstore program.

Open a Bookstore

With this program, schools can order up to \$375 worth of books, and set up a student run bookstore. The books will be shipped with "net 30", which means that your school does not have to put up the money ahead of time. You have 30 days to pay for the books.

Lots of books are available for this bookstore at \$1.29.

This seems like a useful program. Perhaps a PTA/ PTO could be convinced to sponsor a program like this for your school.

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Quick Tips at 08:00

## Top Tips

1:1 Computing Guide

Hewlett Packard (HP) offers a free eBook entitled, "1:1 Computing: Consider all the angles to get the best results"

Source: <http://www.hp.com/go/guide>

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Top Tips at 07:00

## Teacher Resources

Food Tales

<http://www.soupsong.com/ifoodta.html> Soup Songs

<http://www.soupsong.com>

This is an odd Website, but worth visiting for loads of unique background materials for your lessons, and for your students' stories and writing.

Stories, fables, legends, and recipes. There looks like enough here for a "Soup of the Day" for an entire school year.

Everyone eats, although some children (and infants, and adults) eat too much of the wrong foods.

(See our last newsletter Newsletter Vol. 2, No. 4

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Teacher Resources at 06:00

## Book Review

The Little Book of Coaching: Motivating People to be Winners

Author: Blanchard, Ken and Shula, Don

ISBN: 0-06-662103-8

Format: Hardcover

Pub. Date: 1996

Publisher: NY: Harper Business

Pages: 117

Cost: \$17.95 (List)

Available: Amazon at as low as \$11.67 (new) Used from \$3.25 eBay(TM) no current bargains, but check first The Books'

Topics:

This is a motivational book. You can consider teachers to be motivators of their students, and you can substitute the word "Teacher" for "Coach" through most of the book.

The central themes of this book are:

Coaches have to walk the talk before they have the authority to motivate  
Honesty and integrity are for a coach to lose, and regaining trust takes a long time

Building attitudes for winning can help people in every profession.

Keywords:

Conviction-Driven: Never compromise your beliefs

Overlearning: Practice until it's perfect

Audible-Ready: Know when to Change

Consistency: Respond predictably to performance

Honesty-Based: Walk your talk

(p. - 7)

Main Idea:

Tough, street-wise students will over run a teacher that is not prepared.

However, the teacher that is prepared can do the job with a minimal skill set, and very basic tools.

Quotes:

"What do you stand for?...What is the main message you broadcast to people based upon your daily actions and words?"

Remember, if you don't stand for something,  
you'll fall for anything."

(p. - 9)

"Beliefs are what make things happen. Beliefs come true. Inadequate beliefs are setups for inadequate performance. And it's the coach's --the leader's--beliefs that are most important, because they are self-fulfilling."

(p. - 13)

"It sounds trite, but one of the marks of real success in life is to believe that there's a reason for everything. We can't control every event, but we can control our response to it. Life is unpredictable. What makes a winner is that when something happens, that person's brings forth attitudes that can take good events and make them better; likewise it transforms bad events into opportunities to learn."

(p. - 27)

"...Remember, there is no easy walk to excellence. You and your team have to train so hard that you are almost perfect on the day of the game. The best of the best know that there is no such thing as a shortcut. All great results are built on the foundation of practice and preparation."

(P. - 33)

"I ask people all the time, 'Given the amount of time you spend at work, would you rather spend that time being magnificent or ordinary.' 'What do you think they say?' They shout out, 'Magnificent!' And yet, are most of the people in organizations performing magnificently? Of course not. And a key reason is the self-fulfilling prophesy that starts in leaders', managers', coaches', and parents' heads, what the belief that most people are lazy, unreliable, and irresponsible. This belief plays out in how they treat people, and ultimately how these people perform."

(p. - 41)

"...setting goals is important, but most organizations overemphasize this process and don't pay enough attention to what needs to be done to achieve the goals. More important than setting the goals is the follow-up--attention to detail, demand for practice perfection, and all the things that separate things that separate teams that win from those that don't."

(p. - 43)

"Many people are struggling right now because they haven't learned the power of flexibility. They are still living in the past. They are scared to move forward. You know why? Because they don't have the confidence to do so. They are afraid of failure. They are fearful of looking stupid. They doubt themselves. They are stuck in a rut."

(p. - 53)

"There are four consequences or responses people can receive after they perform or do something. The most common response people get for their performance is no response. They do something and no one says anything. The next most common response is negative--they get zapped. As a result, many managers are seen as 'seagull managers.' They are not around until something goes wrong and then they fly in, make a lot of noise, dump on people, and then fly out. Not a very helpful way to be managed.

The last two responses--redirection and positive--are the least used and most effective. When someone does something wrong, redirection focuses his or her energy back on what the original goal was. A positive consequence is welcome when a person does something right or makes progress."

(p. - 69)

"Perhaps today's leaders are too focused upon what's urgent to take time for what is important."

(p. - 77)

"Redirecting is the way to correct a mistake when an individual or team has not learned to do what you want them to do. If people make mistakes while they are learning and you yell at them or punish them, you'll only increase their anxiety and motivate them to avoid the punisher--you."

(p. - 79)

"We promise you that you can only be your best when you are entirely authentic. That means you're not trying to be anybody else. You are being your own true character. You are being honest, not just with other people, but with yourself as well."

(P. - 85)

"A lot of leaders want to tell people what to do, but they don't provide the example. 'Do as I say, not as I do,' doesn't cut it when leading people to a destination of success."

(p. - 91)

Issues Addressed by the Book:

This book addresses the attitude and motivation that all teachers need to internalize and actualize.

Basics that are explored include:

The attitudes, beliefs and behaviors of a record holding professional football coach.

The Book's Shortcomings:

The authors assume that everyone wants to contribute the best of themselves and do whatever it takes to actualize unqualified success in their lives.

The book is long on motivation and a philosophy of success, but does not offer a roadmap of how we turn our character into this kind of competitive personality.

Also, the book assumes that everyone wants to compete and win.

But, some people want to share, teach, heal, inspire, and love.

Others want to create music, dance, poetry, song and literary works...and their passion is not to lead others, but to actualize only the best from within themselves.

Some people want to cooperate on a team, others find that a team

limits their contributions because their gifts are individual, unique and exquisite. For these people, the rule of being authentically themselves overrides the rule about teamwork because the team "waters down" their contributions.

Comments:

Easy to read book. However, the full price seems steep for the amount of information that is contained in the book.

Coaching a professional football team would be like teaching a class with students who all had IQs of over 150...students who were paid thousands of dollars an hour to study.

If professional football players have to be motivated despite their talent and high pay, how much more motivation would ordinary students require?