

Introduction

I received my first teaching assignment in 1970: years five through to nine, one section of each. As is so often the case with new teachers, I was ambitious. I wanted to increase motivation by 400%. This I accomplished my first semester, at the end of which there were four students in each of my classes who were actively engaged in their learning process.

During those early years of teaching, I developed a strong professional interest in making classroom learning relevant to the students' lives. It became clear to me that teachers must put themselves in their students' shoes. There must be a willing suspension of the belief that teachers know, a priori, what students need to learn. Professor Tony Townsend of Monash University estimates the average student will spend three percent of his or her life in the classroom. Middle school students will not agree. To them, virtually all of their lives have been spent there. So we must ask, 'what can we learn about students' perceived quality of life in the classroom and how can we improve it?' No matter what other reforms may come along, the classroom is the primary location for learning in school. It is also the primary site for acculturation and interaction with adults.

Whatever we do, it is essential that students leave our classes with at least as much interest in our subject as when they entered. We must resist the inoculation paradigm ('Don't tell me what the United Nations is up to, I've already had four years of social studies'). We must engage our students with

Learning Ain't What It Used To Be

activities that they perceive as relevant within the context of the global community.

I have three objectives:

- ⌘ To share with you the dynamics of the emerging global society and how your classroom can benefit
- ⌘ To provide quick, easy to use, motivational activities that work with current educational requirements
- ⌘ To provide opportunities for playfulness.

The activities that follow have been developed over a period of 30 years. I have found them to be as stimulating with a group of eight-year olds as they are with a group of eighty-year olds.

Globalisation

and the Challenge to

Teaching and Learning

Students in their middle years spend much of their time in schools that are anachronisms. Australia's schools are attempting to make the systematic changes needed to bring education into the 21st century, but these reforms take time and are uneven in their effect. The key to effective change is the teacher working directly with the students in the classroom. Until reforms address this fact with needed resources, support and training, teachers cannot teach middle years youth in ways that are more attuned to the requirement of living in a global society and thereby more relevant and engaging for students.

To be engaging, instruction must be relevant. To be relevant, this instruction must be related to the personal and social context in which we now live. The current personal and social context is global in that all humans must respond to two processes. These processes are:

- ⌘ Rapid pervasive change
- ⌘ Increasing interconnectedness

Whereas the conditions of life even 50 years ago provided a stable environment in which to socialise and train the young, today's society has moved us beyond

the stable state to a condition that at best is paradoxical, permanent change. In such an environment, you do not prepare youth for the future. Instead, you prepare them in the present. What is now required is an education that goes well beyond socialisation and training.

Adolescence in a global society is quite different from the adolescence most of us as teachers experienced. In fact, our global society may well be conceived as in a period of adolescence, defined by Hargreaves et al, 1996 as “a time of rapid change, immense uncertainty and acute self-reflection. The exhilaration and pain of growing up for many early adolescents resides in their having much less confidence in what they're moving towards than in what they have left behind.” Living with paradox may require a state of continuous adaptation, a positive orientation to the future and a view of education as a life-long process. This process consists of continuous interaction with our minds, bodies and spirits.

This means that our experience of the boundary between teaching and learning is becoming much more fluid, more porous.

Wacky Wordies

Adapted from *Games Magazine* and *Quizzles*, by Michael Pohl, ©Hawker Brownlow Education

The object is to discover the familiar phrase, saying, cliché or name represented by each arrangement of letters and/or symbols.

For example, box 1a depicts the phrase;

'Just between you and me'

Don't groan – the best are yet to come!

	a	b	c	d	e	f
1	you just me	belt hitting	head lo ve heels	v i o l e t s	PRO MISE	agb
2	cry mi/k	-- c ≥ α -- +	Symphon	əjddəəuɪd cake	arrest you're	Around Around
3	0 TV	night fly	S T I N K	injury + insult	r o rail d	my own heart a person
4	at the • of on	dothepe	wear long	strich ground	lu cky	the market
5	worl	the x way	word YYY	search and	ass 8 ass	no ways it ways
6	oholene	t o e a r t h	ooo circus	1 at 3:46	late ne ve ʌ	get a word in
7	gone gone let be gone gone	a chance n	0 MB BA PhD	wheather	SPLOSTACE	SKATING ice
8	lines reading lines	chicken	K N I R D	L D Bridge	k pacē	E C N A L G

Ten Ways to Tolerance

1. Talk to people who annoy you.
2. Don't think your opinion is always better.
3. Accept apologies.
4. Apologise to each other.
5. Don't get back at people.
6. Don't judge people by their beliefs.
7. Think before acting or speaking.
8. Get to know people before judging them.
9. Respect other people's opinions.
10. Think about people's feelings.

Grade three students at Mary E. Roberts Elementary in Moorestown, New Jersey, begin their school year by brainstorming everyday ways they can be more tolerant.