

HTA Newsletter

March 2012

Hesperia Teachers' Association

*Have a question?
Need some help?
Contact an HTA E-
board member!*

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Facebook: I Support
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www.hesperiateachers.com

**A teacher is one who makes himself
progressively unnecessary.
-- Thomas Carruthers**

Dates to Remember:

***3rd Thursday of every month is an opportunity for
teachers in the high desert to gather and discuss
topics at the Hesperia Marriot at 4:30pm.***

Check out our website

www.hesperiateachers.com

It has a new look!!!

Article Highlight:

***Their Time is Occupied,
But Not Their Brains***

By Kirsten Olson

*Author of Wounded by School: Recapturing the Joy in Learning and Standing
Up to Old School Culture*

It's the end of the school year, exam time for school age children. Everywhere around the country children are studying (and Facebooking and YouTubing, and searching online while listening to music). Simultaneously.

While most adults support the act studying for children (teaches them

discipline! keeps them off the streets!), my own three teenage children report they will be doing a lot of stuff in preparation for final exams that, well, may not be very meaningful in the long run. Their time is occupied, but not their brains. They are memorizing 180 irregular verbs tenses, memorizing Boyle's law, Charles' Theorum, preparing for a 90 item multiple choice test on Indian independence, memorizing the dates of the Chinese dynasties, memorizing all the elements in the periodic table that are soluble.

In education, we increasingly look at learning in terms of how challenging it is cognitively and emotionally for kids. These exercises are low level, in some cases, the lowest level: memorization and comprehension. Although students do need to spend some time memorizing some information, it needs to be connected to bigger, higher level concepts and challenges or they very quickly forget it. You know that yourself from your own educational life, and just because you had to do it doesn't mean it's good educational practice now. It's a general problem, one that author John Medina, of Brain Rules (<http://www.brainrules.net>) sums up by saying, if you had to design an environment that was least interesting for the human brain for learning, it would probably be the classroom!

Why is kids' time occupied by school, but not turned on in their brains?

1. Schoolwork isn't designed for the Google/Bing age. We see learning as something you "get," a product to be acquired. Real learning isn't like that, and most of what school asks kids to do is acquire information that can now be accessed on the internet. What else should school provide? An opportunity to talk over that information, critique it, and understand it more deeply, said one high school sophomore recently.
2. Control isn't motivating. Controlling kids, particularly middle and high schoolers, isn't motivating to them. Lots of learning environments are designed, first and foremost, to control kid's behavior.
3. Kids get too much negative feedback on their work, and negative feedback that is too general to be useful in improving performance. "This was a sloppy essay," is not as helpful as, "in your first paragraph, you didn't adequately define your main idea or suggest what the argument here is, and therefore I didn't have a roadmap for moving through the rest of the paragraphs." Most feedback on work is very broad and unhelpful. Scantron, machine-graded tests increasingly used in middle and high school also don't provide much real feedback on performance, unless you personally get a lot from knowing where you fall on a bell curve.
4. You have to sit still too much in school. It's hard to sit still all day. Few adults do it. We ask kids to.
5. You don't get to choose what you are going to learn most of the day. Choice motivates! Lots of school assignments, even if they do offer choice, offer false, superficial ones.
6. We rely too much on superficial tests to judge the value of work. An ocean of evidence supports this, yet we are lining up for more testing.
7. Most kids don't see the connection between what they are asked to do in school, and the world of work they are going to. And they are probably right! A lot of the connections aren't very clear. Old fashioned ideas of authority -- doing it because I told you to -- aren't motivating for this generation of students, either.

8. Adults don't listen to kids. Really listen to them. I observe lots of classrooms where kids are listened to only when they say things that a teacher wants them to say. When kids say things that adults don't want to hear, they hardly get an ear. They may get a detention.
9. Kids don't have a real say in how schools are run. Most student government organizations are Potemkin villages -- students don't really have power to actually change things.
10. Teachers are overstressed, and don't have enough time to think carefully about their students. (Or themselves, or other teachers.)Schools are often lonely places for adults! Teachers have little time to talk about their work, or think about how to do it better. So they often settle into complaining, which creates more stress. The cycle continues.
11. Students are grouped together by age, not by developmental level, or what they know and can do. Students should be able to in and out, backwards and forwards in groups according to their levels of mastery, not based on their age. We should see grouping as aimed at getting kids together for their specific needs at that moment, then regrouping for the next challenge.
12. Human brains are growing all the time. But we don't act like this in school. In fact, we underchallenge of kids, and don't give them enough to do that is real, interesting, and important. We don't encourage making mistakes, another way brains really learn.
13. We undervalue teachers' work. Being a great teacher is like being a great brain surgeon: you need very high level skills, to work on your practice constantly, and be supported by a great team who watch you and help you do better. We treat teachers badly, and this rubs off in the classroom.

What do kids want from school? What they tell me is they want to learn how to be successful, to have friends, and to have fun. Teachers too. Time for big changes in our system, before the next exam.

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Contract Highlight: What is the fourth step of the grievance process?

The fourth step is the Level Three Grievance.

- a.) If the grievant is not satisfied with the decision at Level Two, the grievant may, within fifteen (15) days of the receipt of the Superintendent's decision, file a written request with the Superintendent for a hearing before the Board in closes session. Such hearing will be held within fifteen (15) days of the receipt of the request. The Superintendent will notify the grievant ten

(10) days in advance of the hearing. If the grievant chooses to have representation at the hearing, notification of such shall be given the Superintendent five (5) days before the hearing.

- b.) The Board shall render a decision by the next regularly scheduled school board meeting.
- c.) For issues regarding salary, health, and welfare benefits, and negotiations, this will be the final step in the grievance process.

CTA Member Services:

Theme Parks & Entertainment

TSA special services offers discounts to our members on a majority of entertainment tickets. There are so many venues and attractions offered that we won't list them all here. Be sure to check the special member services [Buying Guide](#) for a full listing.

Check out some highlights:

[Disneyland](#) – What will you celebrate? There's so much in life worth celebrating and the Disneyland Resort is the place to celebrate it all! With two magical Theme Parks, plus one of Southern California's most spectacular entertainment, dining and shopping districts, this is the place to be!

[Medieval Times Dinner & Tournament](#) – North America's #1 dinner attraction. Experience spectacular pageantry, dramatic horsemanship, breathtaking swordplay and falconry while feasting on a four-course banquet served in true medieval, pre-silverware fashion. The evening is highlighted by six Knights of the Realm riding magnificent Andalusian stallions.

[San Diego Zoo and Wild Animal Park](#) – Span the globe in one afternoon, viewing rare and intriguing wildlife from nearly every region of the world, in just one location – the San Diego Zoo. The Zoo is renowned as one of the best zoos in the world, with such wildlife as mandrills, clouded leopards and pygmy hippos.

Also:

- ⌵ Great America
- ⌵ LEGOLAND
- ⌵ Monterey Bay Aquarium
- ⌵ SeaWorld
- ⌵ Six Flags Discovery Kingdom
- ⌵ Universal Studios
- ⌵ Movies, movies, movies

And much more!

For more information, visit the CTA website.

If you have a special event, teaching story, announcement, or anything exciting happening at your site that you would like to share, please send it to hta.comschair@gmail.com.