

Mixed Reviews

The public respects teachers, but not teacher unions

Debate ran high within Barack Obama's transition team over whether the next Secretary of Education should be a traditionalist in sync with the national teacher unions or a reformer who will help break the hold those unions have on Democratic Party policy. President Obama's choice of Chicago School Superintendent Arne Duncan is seen as a move to bridge those competing camps.

While 64 percent of adults said being a teacher is one of the most important jobs in our country today, two-thirds of U.S. voters (66 percent) say the teacher unions—the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers—are more interested in protecting their members' jobs than in the quality of education, according to a recent Rasmussen Reports national telephone survey.

Eighty percent of adults surveyed said their teachers were at least somewhat important in shaping the direction of their lives. However, only 23 percent of voters say educational quality comes first for the unions.

Sixty-six percent (66 percent) of voters believe the Secretary of Education should be an advocate for students rather than teachers, but 19 percent say teachers should be the secretary's priority. Fifteen percent aren't sure.

Source—Rasmussen Reports is an electronic publishing firm specializing in the collection, publication, and distribution of public opinion polling information.



Writing Better

Savvy Teachers Find New Way to Combat Students' Text Messaging Habits while Gearing Up for State Exams

It's an uphill battle that teachers face every year: how to keep their students on track with their writing, especially in time for their upcoming state exams.

Shorthand text messaging habits like "Wat r u doin znite?" and the go-to "TTYL" have only helped to further the problem of shorthand writing. Teachers everywhere are seeing these abbreviated words, terms, and contractions used within their students' formal writing assignments.

The traditional writing process, which involves drafting, revising, and editing, often becomes too much busy work in today's world of instant-communicators. As students want to have their papers done as quickly as possible, they resort to these familiar and comfortable shortcuts. How are teachers going to combat their shorthand texting habits and get them prepared for state exams?

Savvy teachers across the nation have found a way to not only prepare their children for the exams but also cut down the time it takes to get students back into their school routine after a break. Many have turned to the School Edition of MY Access!, a web-based computer program created by Vantage Learning and currently used by over one million students in classrooms nationwide.

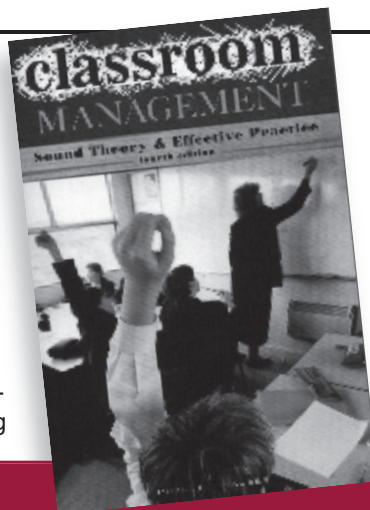
MY Access! gives teachers and students immediate feedback, enabling students to constantly edit and thus improve their essays. It also lets them write 10-20 times faster than by hand, improving their typing skills as well as their writing skills. Teachers can not only receive immediate feedback on students' key strengths as well as areas in need of improvement, but also prepare individualized lessons depending on student's specific shortcomings or challenges. For example, MY Access! School Edition has proven success for students in Alhambra, California, where writing scores went from 20%-70% passing on their state standard STAR exams. ■

Classroom Management

Sound Theory and Effective Practice

Educators need a balance between discipline theory and its practice in the classroom. This is especially important in today's educational accountability. In addition, teachers need to select, learn, and implement a discipline model that best reflects how they feel students should be treated.

Classroom Management by Dr. Robert Tauber is written for those who are new to teaching



as well as for those who are already seasoned teachers, but have had little, if any, coursework in discipline. It presents several sound frameworks readers can use to evaluate six tried-and-true discipline models. Tauber explores a number of relevant topics, some controversial, as well as how to handle problem behaviors. A chapter describes "A through Z" discipline strategies that can be immediately put into use.

Published by Greenwood Publications, Westport, CT, www.greenwood.com.