PORTFOLIO

STRUCTURAL REFLECTION
OF THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Introduction

During one and a half month 68 teachers - finalists of the “Teaching Excellent & Achievement Project” who came from the following 9 countries: Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, India, Ukraine, Bangladesh, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan have been participating in an intensive professional development course in the United States of America.

Three major universities of the U.S.: George Mason University (the State of Virginia), Huntsville University (the State of Alabama), Nebraska State University have offered their great minds and modern technologies for the professional development and the growth of the participants’ experience.

The treasure that is called knowledge is generously shared by the participants and their instructors. The further implementation of the got
ideas will play a tremendous role in rising the quality of education and teaching.

Professional Reflections: Who am I as a teacher?

What does a word “teacher” mean, what is its’ definition? Looking through different online dictionaries I found that all of them define this word in the same way:

- Somebody who teaches, especially as a profession;
- A person who teaches in a school;
- One whose occupation is to instruct;
- A tutor;
- Trainer, master, director, governor, leader; disciplinarian;
- Professor, lecturer, pedagogue, monitor;
- Guide, mentor (adviser), pioneer, propagandist, model for imitation.

I would add some more:

- A judge;
- A nurse;
- A babysitter.

The list of the definitions can be endless, but one thing is true: a teacher came to this World to serve people.

Ones, I was asked why I decided to work as a “Teacher”. Why? Because it became my dream from the moment I realized myself as a
personality. I still have very vivid recollections about my childhood. That was a nice time full of joy and games. My heart bit stronger when we played “School games,” and my part was always leading: I was a “Teacher”. My great desire to be helpful to people has always lived in my heart and that huge love to contribute into their development as a personality was my trampling to the profession as a teacher.

As for me I believe that my role as a teacher is to prepare my learners to develop autonomy so that they can continue to learn without me. I know that once my learners step outside of the classroom door, I won’t be with them and that it is important for to give them the ability to function without me. This means that it is important for me to help my learners not only acquire knowledge, but especially to develop the skills and strategies they need to become autonomous. I think I have come to this understanding gradually and I think that my experiences as an adult learner of languages have shaped this conviction.

On a practical level this means that when I plan a lesson or a seminar, I have to use activities and approaches which really will help learners become strategic and critical thinkers. Whenever possible I try to include inductive activities so that learners can derive the target principle or information by themselves instead of me presenting it directly. I also use many learner-centered activities to give students the opportunity to work out and apply what they’ve learned during the lessons outside of the classroom.

This question “Who am I as a teacher”? I have asked myself for the several times. And the answer is always one: I am a person who every new day falls in love with his profession, with people who are in the surroundings, with schoolchildren, whose full of curiosity eyes make my life sensible!
Fieldwork Reflections

on visiting Poe Middle School, Annandale, Virginia

“School is a second home’ – this saying is frequently heard from teachers. It is really so, as many of us while our study at school spend almost the majority of the time at school. The same thing may be mentioned about us – teachers. Sometimes there are days when we forget that the working day has already finished and we are to go home, but we stay at work helping students with their homework, sharing ideas with colleagues, planning our next day at school. During my visit to Poe Middle School I noticed similarities like:

- teachers are of a great interest towards their work and students,
- students in their turn actively participated in the lesson activities, were helpful to one another.

What impressed me more are everyday school activities that we do differently. Here I would like to make some comparisons:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poe Middle School</th>
<th>Kadirjan Batirov “Olymp” lyceum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of students: 1120</td>
<td>Number of students: 350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grades: 6 - 8</td>
<td>Grades: preparatory classes - 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public school</td>
<td>Private school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the morning children have TA time: they listen to advertisements on TV, after that they read or draw something. What impressed is that in their TA check list children assess if they used time wisely.</td>
<td>In the morning children stand in rows in the school yard do morning exercises, sing national hymn, listen to the announcements of a director.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One lesson duration is 95 minutes, 4 minutes break time. Mondays, each lesson is about 45 minutes with 4 minutes between classes.</td>
<td>One lesson duration is 40 minutes, 5 minutes break time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sound of the bell is like a melody.</td>
<td>Sound of the bell is like z-z-z-z.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On music lesson children play musical instruments. There are band, orchestra, and chorus (singing) classes.</td>
<td>On music lesson children sing songs accompanied by teachers playing the piano.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During the lesson it’s o.k. if students stand up and move.</td>
<td>During the lesson students are not allowed to move without teacher’s permission.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If a student wants to leave a classroom he takes “Hall Pass” sign.</td>
<td>If a student wants to leave a classroom he asks permission of a teacher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students work in groups very smoothly, everyone knows what to do.</td>
<td>Students work in groups frequently asking a teacher what to do next.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students write home work in their handbooks.</td>
<td>Students write home work in their handbooks called “Diary”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers get written info from administration from boxes and in emails.</td>
<td>Teachers get oral info from administration during meetings at the director's room.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers have meetings ones a months to discuss how educational process is going, plan and get info for the next months. Teachers meet in grade level teams once a week, although many ESOL teachers are unable to attend these meetings since they often teach multiple grade levels and therefore teach during these meetings. The ESOL department meets together after school once a month.</td>
<td>Teachers have meetings ones in two months to get info for the next semester, but except that meet twice in a week to discuss how educational process is going; teachers meet in grade level teams once a month.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers wear strings on their necks with the name of their school and identification tag.</td>
<td>Teachers wear nothing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers are free to write their own lesson plans which are rarely checked, unless they are the part of the observation cycle where administrators visit their classroom several times each year to monitor their progress. This happens for the first three years of teaching in the Fairfax county, and after this every third year.</td>
<td>Teachers have their lesson plans signed daily by a vice director.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If a teacher feels like not being able to conduct a lesson they can find a substitute teacher by internet or by phone.</td>
<td>If a teacher feels like not being able to conduct a lesson they can find a substitute among their school teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classrooms are decorated with posters.</td>
<td>Classrooms are decorated with tables referring to the subject.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students move from one class to another to have their next lesson.</td>
<td>Teachers used to move from one classroom to another to conduct a lesson, but now they don’t.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students don’t stand up to meet a teacher when the lesson starts.</td>
<td>Students stand up to meet a teacher when the lesson starts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For students elective courses begin when they are in the sixth grade.</td>
<td>No elective courses, every course is dictated by a ministry of education.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The implementation of the differences that will be appropriate for the environment I work in will make educational and teaching process more modern and fruitful.
1. Name of method or strategy:

“Vocabulary Champion”

2. When is this method or strategy useful?

It is useful to revise vocabulary.

3. What are the steps involved in using this strategy or method?

- All students sit in a circle, except one (Student 1 = S1) who is standing facing one of his classmates (S2);
- Teacher names any word in Spanish;
- S1 and S2 should sound the asked word in English;
- That student who tells the word first, gets one score, (s)he should stand next to S3;
- The game continues in the same circle unless one of the students gets 10 scores. (S) he is the “Vocabulary champion”.

4. When will this method or strategy be useful in your setting?

This method can be applied to any lesson when the revision of the learnt material takes place.
Portfolio Strategy Sheet #2

1. Name of method or strategy:

“Around the World”

2. When is this method or strategy useful?

It is useful to activate students work, develops their social skills like being helpful, polite, attentive to one another.

3. What are the steps involved in using this strategy or method?

- During the lesson a teacher observes students’ work;
- Teacher writes names of hardworking or helpful students on a sticker;
- (S) he puts stickers on the desks of those students;
- In the end of the lesson all stickers are collected from the students and are placed into a box;
- One of the students comes and takes out any of the stickers and reads written name out to the class;
- That student whose name is read becomes a winner of the lesson and gets a price.

4. When will this method or strategy be useful in your setting?
This method can be useful at any lesson, as it demands learners to organize their work, helps them to use their time wisely and teaches high social skills.

Portfolio Strategy Sheet #3

1. Name of method or strategy:

   “Charades”

2. When is this method or strategy useful?

   It is useful to practice students’ oral speech in English language and to revise vocabulary. It involves students of visual, tactile and kinesthetic learning styles. It helps to develop social skills.

3. What are the steps involved in using this strategy or method?

   ➢ Students sit in a group of 3 or 4;
   ➢ Each group is given 10 – 15 cards with written sentences;
   ➢ All cards are placed with the face down in the middle of the table;
   ➢ In turns students take cards, and mime it’s information;
4. When will this method or strategy be useful in your setting?

This method can be useful as a revision of the word stock. It is a nice tool to activate tactile, kinesthetic and visual learners.

Portfolio Strategy Sheet #4

1. Name of method or strategy:

“KWL chart”

2. When is this method or strategy useful?

It is useful to summarize students’ background knowledge, teaches to select new information from the read text by organizing it into the chart, and develops curiosity in students.

3. What are the steps involved in using this strategy or method?

➢ Teacher asks students to write a theme of the lesson and to draw a table with 3 cells:

“Ecological crises”
Students fill in the information they already know about the ecological crises into the first column;

Teacher asks students to think what else they would like to know about this topic and fill in the second column;

While reading the text students take notes into the third column;

For the home work students are given a task to find answers on the questions they asked in the second column.

4. When will this method or strategy be useful in your setting?

This method can be applied to any lesson as an effective tool of summarizing students’ background knowledge of a definite theme. It teaches to read a text thoughtfully and attentively. It develops critical thinking of students.

Portfolio Strategy Sheet #5

5. Name of method or strategy:

“RAFT” – Role/Audience/Format/Theme

6. When is this method or strategy useful?
It is useful to organize learners’ ideas before they start fulfilling a writing task.

7. What are the steps involved in using this strategy or method?

➢ Teacher asks students to draw a table with 4 cells:

“RAFT”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

➢ Students fill in a first column by answering on a question: “Who writes?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Producer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planet “Earth”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

➢ Students fill in a second column by answering on a question: “Who is the Audience?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Audience</td>
<td>Format</td>
<td>Theme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>Children</td>
<td>Letter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife</td>
<td>Husband</td>
<td>Telegram</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Producers</td>
<td>Buyer</td>
<td>Manual</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee</td>
<td>Employer</td>
<td>Resume</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planet “Earth”</td>
<td>People</td>
<td>Slogan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students fill in a third column by answering on a question: “What is the Format?”

Students fill in a forth column by answering on a question: “What is the Theme?”
From the ready table students choose their role, audience, format and a theme.

Individual writing for 15 minutes (students should write leaving space between lines, so that during revision they had space to rewrite their ideas);

Students rough copies are displayed around the classroom;

Students read one another’s work and write their comments in the bottom of the paper;

Individual revision and rewriting.

8. When will this method or strategy be useful in your setting?

This method can be applied to any lesson when written task is taking its place. It is an effective tool of organizing ideas and is a starting point of any writing process.
Lesson Plan # 1

Author: Nurgul Abdukerimova (Kyrgyzstan)

Topic: Song presentation.

Level: intermediate, advanced.

Grade: 10-11.

Objective: Students will be able to listen to music and develop their listening, reading, speaking and writing skills.

Bell work: review the previous lesson.

Brain storm: Put some pictures on the board which shows the meaning of the song. Then ask what about the song is going to be.

Pair work. Students work in pair discuss about the pictures and create their story. Then each pair do presentation.

Vocabulary: new words.

Pre-listening: Students again work in pair and get a song with different gaps. They tell to each other the words and fill the gaps.

Listening: Students listen the song and check the gaps.

Post activity: Students give the meaning of the song through pictures or make a project.
True or False sentences

Put cutting song in order by listening the song.

Homework: Students can make crosswords or puzzles with the new words

Match the words with definitions.  Assessment:

Lesson Plan # 2

Intern: Tasleema Begum  Grade Level: IX

Title: “Save the Earth”  Subject: English

Skills: Reading with comprehension, recitation

RATIONALE:

I planned this lesson on environmental education for class nine. In this lesson, the strategy, which I used for teaching the lesson, was to infuse environmental education concepts into English using a poem titled “SAVE THE EARTH” which I collected from one of my colleague. The reasons for selecting this poem was in this poem a quiet number of environmental issues and concepts are included, which I thought would be easily taught and understood by the students. Moreover, I believe the use of poem is a useful technique for developing environmental awareness among the students. Beside this, when students will recite the poem several times, they will grasp the main idea or the message very quickly and always remember it.

Objective: By the end of the lesson the students will be able to:

• Understand the importance of saving the environment
• Understand their responsibilities towards environment
• Express their opinions through speaking
• Develop reading skills
• Develop social skills such as sharing ideas by using soft voices and listening to each other.

**Teacher’s Resources:**

• Charts depicting two kinds of environment
• A poem on Earth
• Whiteboard, marker, etc.

**Students’ Resources:**

• Hand-outs
• Task sheets
• A poem “Save the Earth”

**LESSON DEVELOPMENT**

**Activity # 1**

• **Warm – up activity:** The teacher will display two charts, depicting two different kinds of environment: clear one and polluted one. Teacher will then discuss the different features of these two environment and as questions like:
  - What differences can you see in these two pictures?
  - What is the reason for this difference?
  - In which of these two worlds would you like to live? Why?

• The teacher will announce the topic and write it on the black board.

• The class will be divided into five groups of five students in each group.
The teacher will distribute the text and task sheet based on poem “Save the Earth”

Activity #2

- Teacher will ask one student (as volunteer) to recite the poem and request others to listen attentively. After the recitation, teacher will ask the meaning of key terms that students might find difficult to understand. Through classroom discussion teacher will explain the meaning of difficult words.
- Teacher will then distribute the task sheets with questions like:
  ✓ What according to the poet is our duty?
  ✓ How can we save the water from being wasted?
  ✓ Why doesn’t the poet want the animals to be killed?
- Students will discuss with the group members and write down their findings.

Activity #3

- Teacher will instruct the students to present their opinion “How we could save our Earth?”
- Through group work teacher will activate the students.
- Students will present their responses in variety of ways i.e. role play, graphic organizer, making poster, etc.

Feedback:

- Teacher will appreciate students’ presentation and give them constructive feedback.

Home work:

- Write an essay (300 words) why we need to save the Earth?

SAVE THE EARTH
Oh yes it’s the environment,
We are taking it towards retirement,
Just for the sake of fun,
We kill the animals with gun.
We live under the sun,
And on its land we run.
To look after its beauty,
It is our duty.
To leave this natal sod transferable,
We are to God answerable.
Since its evolution,
It has been undergoing revolution.
We must think of some solution,
For the resulting pollution.
May God grant us the sense?
To make the forest dense.
It’s the gift we have gained.
It needs to be sustained.
For one day we will die.
Under the earth we shall lie.
We must, therefore, leave some
For the others who will come.
How will they know?
That it was white as snow.
Make the springs and streams pure
For the livings to endure.
Let us not destroy the beauty around us,
As it is, surely, not just for us.
It’s time to wake up folks,
Let not your cars smoke.
Let not the water waste,
In hurry or in haste.
As a result of deliberation,
I have come to the conclusion,
That we have to bring about a revolution,
To do away with the pollution,

Written by: Nighet

Jabeen

TASK SHEET

Date: ________________________  Class:
________________________

Group leader:_________  Group participants:
______________

Answer the following questions:

1. What do you think is the main idea of the poem?

__________________________________________________________________________

2. How do forests affect the environment?
3. How can we save water from being wasted?

4. Why doesn’t the poet want the animals to be killed?

5. How will you feel in a clean and healthy environment?

6. How will you feel in a dirty and unhealthy environment?

7. What can you do to make the forest dense?

8. What does the poetess want to say when she uses the words “we have to bring about a revolution?”

OBSERVATION CHICKLIST to monitor group work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>What is happening in the class</th>
<th>Groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Have the students understood the task?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lesson Plan #3

Debabrata Saha  
Grade - ix

Bangladesh  
Time – 40 min

A School in Town

Objectives: By the end of the lesson learners will be able to –

* Read a letter and take notes  (linguistic )

* Talk about the picture  (spatial )

* Fill in the spider gram in groups  ( interpersonal )
*Take part in debate (intrapersonal)

*Tell about the natural view of their own school (naturalist)

*Say something about quantity and measurement (mathematical)

Focus:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Function</th>
<th>G.structure</th>
<th>Vocabulary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Describing</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ample, Lounge,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>Comparing</td>
<td>Present simple</td>
<td>Gatherings,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hesitation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Presentation:

A. (5 min) – Material Presentation
Ask SS to look at the picture. Ask to guess what the picture says. There will be a short discussion on the SS opinion about the picture.

B. (10 min) - Silent Reading
Ask SS to read the text about a school in the town.

After reading, handouts will be given to them and ask SS to fill the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Starts(time)</th>
<th>Breaks up</th>
<th>No. of SS</th>
<th>No. of teachers</th>
<th>No. of classes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
C. (10 min) Debating

The teacher will introduce the idea:

We see a lot of co-curricular activities in Rafiq’s school. Do you have any such activities? The answer will be “Yes” and SS will tell about some activities like debating club, literary club, sports club etc. So, who are the members of debating club?

The teacher will make two groups of 4 members leading one of debating club. The topic –

Our School Is Better Then Rafiq’s School

C. (10 min) : Filling up Spider graph (group work)
Creating some groups, the T will tell SS to fill up the spider gram in groups taking information of Rafiq’s school.

Again fill up the spider gram of your own school’s context.

D. (5 min) : Feed back

F. Assignment: Write a short paragraph about the natural view of your school.
No policy of school administration can be realized without the support of the Community.

In the Fairfax County, schools pay significant importance to active involvement of parents into school and learning activities. Moreover the school authorities emphasize greatly and enthusiastically on the support of parents for the successful accomplishment in schools.
What is the Parents Teachers Association (PTA)?

It is a part of school with a noble mission, which plays important role to improve communication between parents and teachers.

Becoming a member of PTA, gives parents an opportunity to demonstrate their children the importance of education.

PTA is a committed and supportive part of a school which contributes largely and helps students - who are their own children.

These PTAs, help students to become life-long learners and successful citizens.

PTA meetings take place once per week. Usually this day is Thursday.

Parents – leaders, those who know both languages: English and one of the local languages are informed about the meeting agenda.

The PTA mails invitations to the rest of the parents.

Usually ethnic groups sit together so that it is easier to share opinions within the group, and communicate to the presenters with the help of a teacher – leader.
Teachers Working with Parents and the Community

Topics for discussions may vary according to the age of children and their preferences. All the parents, present in the meeting are given a chance to get answers on problem questions as some of the parents may have already met the same problem and had successfully overcome it. During the discussion the teachers guide parents in questions like “When do I need to register my child to school?” up to “What should I think about before picking a college or university for my child?”

Another part of organizations of parents and teachers involvement is - Fairfax County Resource Center for Parents (FCRCP). It is established in every school. This kind of resource center is arranged for parents to enhance their knowledge about parenting. FCPS provides books, films that give actual advice on how to be a good parent. As an example, one can find any information on how to be a good listener while talking to a child, how to motivate the youth towards study, and what to do if your child is facing problems not only in study, but in the social life as well.
One of the significant parts of the activity between the school and the parents is teachers’ visiting children at home. Such casual meetings help to strengthen relationship between the instructors and parents, as a teacher will immerse into the world in which the child lives and this knowledge will be very helpful in the way of building further relations.

As TEA fellows from Bangladesh, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan we are very fortunate to receive amazing and informative knowledge about the techniques and ways of teaching and effective, successful learning.

We want to carry all these innovative ideas back home to share and implement in our contexts.

We are also very pleased to have so many new friends and associates in America, in schools and in community.
1. Reward children. Give praise, recognition, a special privilege or increased responsibility for a job well done. Emphasize the good things they do, not the bad.

2. Take their ideas, emotions and feelings seriously. Don't belittle them by saying, "You'll grow out of it" or "it's not as bad as you think."

3. Define limits and rules clearly, and enforce them. But do allow leeway for your children within these limits.

4. Be a good role model. Let your children know that you feel good about yourself. Also let them see that you too can make mistakes and can learn from them.

5. Teach your children how to deal with time and money. Help them spend time wisely and budget their money carefully.

6. Have reasonable expectations for your children. Help them to set reasonable goals so they can achieve success.

7. Help your children develop tolerance toward those with different values, backgrounds and norms. Point out other people's strengths.

8. Give your children responsibility. They will feel useful and valued.

9. Be reasonable. Give support when children need it.

10. Show them that what they do is important to you. Talk with them about their activities and interests. Go to their games, parents' day at school, drama presentations, and awards ceremonies.

11. Express your values, but go beyond "do this" or "I want you to do that." Describe the experiences that determined your values, the decisions you made to accept certain beliefs, the reasons behind your feelings.

12. Spend time together. Share favorite activities.

13. Discuss problems without placing blame or commenting on a child's character. If children know that there is a problem but don't feel attacked, they are more likely to help look for a solution.

14. Use phrases that build self-esteem, such as "Thank you for helping" or "That was an excellent idea!" Avoid phrases that hurt self-esteem, "Why are you so stupid?" "How many times have I told you?"
1. Be familiar with school rules and regulations and support them.
2. Take an active interest in your child's activities, both academic and extracurricular.
3. Talk to teachers about your child's behavior patterns.
4. When consistent discipline problems occur, talk to your child. Find out why he or she is misbehaving. Be an active listener.
5. Stress the importance of good discipline at home and at school to your child.
6. Monitor your child's behavior at home by encouraging the discussion of daily events.
7. Be a good role model for your children.
8. Show respect for your children and they will show respect for others.
9. Encourage independence. Give your children a chance to take part in making decisions about things that affect their lives.
10. Be sure your child eats properly. Bad eating habits can cause disciplinary problems. Good behavior begins at home.
11. Never punish in anger.

Take an interest in learning and let your child know it.
George Mason University, College of Education & Human Development, Center for International Education Teaching Excellent & Achievement Project
Funded by IREX – U.S. Department of State/ECA

✓ Be an active school volunteer.
✓ Talk with your child's teacher.
✓ Serve on the School Advisory Committee.
✓ Set high standards of achievement in all you do.
✓ Let your child know you have high expectations.
✓ Make sure your child is well prepared for school each day.
✓ Encourage your child to have good study habits.
✓ Display a positive attitude.
✓ Emphasize learning during family time.
✓ Be a lifelong learner yourself.

Action research

Statement of the Problem and Justification:

In my classroom as in many your classrooms there are always students who almost all the time keep silent and they hardly ever participate in the class' discussions. We used to call them “shy students.” Shy students are always a part of the class, they suffer from the lack of the self – confidence and usually keep away from the rest of the group.
Welcome to the Shyness in the Classroom page of the Shake Your Shyness website. I envision this page as being a constant work in progress and, with your help, my hope is that it will come to serve as an clearinghouse for information about shyness that can be of use to educational professionals. When completed this page will contain an overview of shyness as it pertains to children, tips for working with shy children in the classroom, a forum for discussing issues and sharing ideas, as well as links to additional resources on the internet. While the page is not nearly complete, I felt it was far enough along to be helpful, so I decided to publish it and expand it’s contents as time permits.  I welcome whatever input you might have to help me make it better meet your needs (email me).

- **Shyness in the Classroom . . . An Overview of the Issues**
- **Tips For Working With Shy Children**
- **Classroom Exercises**
- **Educational Professionals’ Forum (coming soon)**
- **Helpful Websites**

**Shyness in the Classroom . . . An Overview of the Issues**

**Definitions--What is shyness?**  Because shyness is a lay term, it has no single standardized definition. And while existing definitions differ from expert to expert, I think you will find that most definitions incorporate elements of the following:
Shyness is the act of feeling uncomfortable in social situations in ways that interfere with our ability to enjoy ourselves, to perform at the level we're capable of or that cause us to avoid social situations altogether.

Setting the stage for helping by changing the way we think about shyness. Notice that I define shyness as an "act of feeling" uncomfortable--not as a personality trait or temperament, but as a "feeling." In this regard, my definition may differ somewhat from others--and it is an important difference.

While I do think there is such a thing as a "shy person" (i.e. a person who "feels" shy much of the time), I've found it both more accurate and more helpful to think of shyness as a feeling with varying degrees of frequency and intensity that comes and goes depending on circumstances.

Let me explain what I mean with an example. Let's take a totally different feeling--hunger, for instance--and compare it to shyness. We feel hunger when the absence of food in our stomach triggers a reaction that tells us it's time to eat. Similarly, we feel shy when a threatening social situation triggers an anxious reaction that tells us it's time to fight or flee (i.e., the Fight or Flight Reaction). When we satisfy our stomachs with food, our hunger goes away, just as when we satisfy our fear with safety, our anxiousness goes away. The hungrier we are, the more food it may take to satisfy us, and the more frightened we are, the more emotional reassurance we may require.

When we don't address our body's need for food in a responsible way, we can develop an eating disorder, just as when we don't address our body's need for social safety in a way that works, we can learn to feel shy. Repeated over time, these shy feelings can become a habit of sorts--and voilà, we have what most people would think of as a shy person.

But isn't this just a bunch of semantics? Aren't we just splitting hairs?

The answer is "no"---at least not in the eyes of a shy person.

You see, shyness viewed as a "feeling" is difficult, but manageable, whereas shyness viewed as an "enduring personality trait" can be overwhelming. Had I, as a shy child, believed that I had a shy "personality," I might easily have gotten discouraged and given up. But because I viewed my shyness as a feeling, as something I could do something about, I always felt there was hope. I knew that if I
could just figure out what to do to fit in and muster the courage to do it, everything would be OK—and it was.

My motivation for sharing this here with you, is to help you understand how important it is for shy children to know that they’re OK—that there’s hope and a chance that they can fit in—that just because they feel shy at one point in time, doesn’t mean that they have to feel shy in all places at all times for the rest of their lives.

As this page develops, I hope to provide you with information that can help you distinguish between the different kinds of shyness children feel—i.e., shyness born out of disappointing experiences, shyness born out of a biological predisposition to anxiety, shyness born out of learning disabilities that make it hard for them to read social cues and more . . .

But it the meantime, please know that it is the feelings that children have in the here and now that are most important to them—that by helping children through those feelings you are giving them the gift of the hope that they can belong.

How can you help? For starters, know that you really can help—small things make a huge difference in a shy child’s world. The simple act of recognizing and understanding a child’s feelings can create an environment that feels safe—or at least safer—to a shy child.

I can still remember that day in Calculus class in high school when I finally mustered the courage to raise my hand to answer a question in the mostly male classroom with the male teacher who had to have been able to see my hand exposed in the air as plain as day, but who chose to call on someone else. I can safely say that his response did little to help me overcome shyness—particularly when it happened more than once. He just didn’t know how badly I needed for him to call on me.

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Small things do make difference in a shy child’s life—a compliment, acknowledgement of an effort, structured exercises that help them
interact can make all a difference in a shy child's ability to participate in your classroom.

What follows are tips, classroom exercises and links to additional resources on the internet. Because I would like this site to serve as a forum for educational professionals and I'm still learning how to access the software, please email your questions, thoughts, tips, etc to me and I will do my best to review and post them as time permits. Your input and feedback are critical to the success of this site and will be greatly appreciated.

**Tips For Working With Shy Children**

1. **Normalize shyness and depict it in a positive light.**
   "Normalizing" shyness should be pretty easy. Given that nearly fifty percent of the adult population in the United States is believed to be shy, shyness really is normal.

   The problem is that most people are embarrassed by their shyness and keep it to themselves. As a result they go through life thinking they're different from everyone one else when nothing could be farther from the truth. As educational professionals, you are in a position to dispel this notion by showing your students just how "normal" shyness is and that shyness doesn't have to hold them back.

   - Compare shy children to other shy children who have grown up to be successful adults: "You're just like Abraham Lincoln. Did you know that he was afraid of girls, too?" or "I guess you're going to be a great movie star like Tom Hanks. He used to be really shy!" I can't tell you how reassuring it was for me to learn the number of shy children who grew up to be uncommonly successful adults. Try asking your fellow teachers how many of them used to be shy. You may be surprised by the results. It you used to be shy, you may want to share that with your shy students as well. (Check out the [Shy Celebrities](#) page of this website for more information).
   - Be sure to mention great leaders, inventors, entertainers and politicians who were once shy when reviewing their lives.
   - Portray shy people as more courageous than the average person, because it takes more energy for them to do the same things that an outgoing person would do.

2. **Make regular contact.** It's easy for shy children to fall through the cracks and the farther they fall, the harder it is for them to accept attention when it's given. Making contact with shy children on a regular basis—daily, if
possible---helps keep shy children connected. You don't have to do much---a comment, question or smile can make a big difference. The key is to make contact in a way that doesn't single shy children out as being different.

3. **Give shy children a job to do.** Much like shy adults, shy children do better when they have something to do that allows them to: 1) feel like they're making a contribution and 2) have a reason to interact with others---in this case, their fellow students. The trick is to match the level of social interaction of a task with the tolerance level of each child. Some children thrive with no more than a little push. These children often lack the confidence to get started or, in some cases, simply don't know how to approach other children. Any assignment that helps them break the ice may be all they need to get the social ball rolling. Other children require much more support. They are terrified just to be in the classroom and you will need to proceed more cautiously. For these children something as simple as a brief encounter with their teacher is enough to send them reeling.

I've listed some tasks below in order of increasing difficulty---although sometimes it's hard to tell what will or won't be difficult for a particular child.

- Closing the classroom door when the bell rings
- Straightening up the room after class
- Passing out/collecting papers
- Working in a small group on a teacher assigned project
- Taking a survey of other students during down times (e.g., recess, study periods, etc) requiring that shy children go up to and interact with other children in a teacher assigned role.

As you can see, the first task requires little or no interaction with anything but the door. This is quite deliberate as it allows a child to participate in class without having to interact with other children or the teacher---but even this task may be too threatening for particularly anxious children. At the other extreme, is the last task which requires that a child go up to his/her fellow classmates and initiate a question and answer period. As I'm sure you know, it's best to come up with tasks that fit into your normal classroom routine and can be maintained with little or no disruption to your regular classroom regimen.

One word of caution before you begin----assigning tasks to shy children works best when you also assign tasks to other children who are not shy. Shy children may be uncomfortable, but they're rarely dumb. They can usually spot a job that was created just for them and so can their classmates ---further drawing attention to the shy child's
self-consciousness and classroom agony. Properly executed, however, tasks such as these can make a lifetime of difference in a shy child's world.

4. **Comment on their successes and post their work.** Most shy children crave attention, but dread it at the same time. They want to feel special, but have difficulty being in the limelight. Posting their work in prominent places in the classroom can be a big boost to their self-esteem, just as commenting on their accomplishments in front of the class can make a huge difference.

Compliments, however, must be given with care. When dealing with children that shun attention, it's best to use a hit and run approach to compliments—that is, to offer a compliment, then immediately move to another subject. Don't give them the opportunity to struggle or even think about what they need to do to respond or, if the compliment was made in front of the entire class, don't leave enough time for the class to turn and look at the student. Simply move forward knowing that a good deed has been done.

Example:

A student comes up to your desk to ask a question. You notice they have an interesting item of clothing or their hair looks particularly nice. Simply compliment them and move on to the business at hand.

"Great sweatshirt. I really like it. So what can I do for you?"

When dealing with very shy children, it may be best to avoid eye contact until you sense that the child is able to respond comfortably. This may take anywhere from one to several encounters. And by all means, *don't wait for a response to your compliment!* If they give one, fine. Go with it. But don't wait. That defeats the purpose of this exercise.
Finally, never compliment children about things you don't mean. It only confuses them in the long run.

5. **Help Children Learn To Initiate Contact With Others.**

Walking up to a stranger or even a friend can be difficult for an adult, but for a shy child, it's nothing less than torture. Most shy children dream of being able to run up to a group of kids on the playground and join in, but they literally don't know how. Instead, they wait for someone to ask them to play or pretend that they're not interested.

Anything you do to promote a shy child’s ability to initiate contact with others can make a huge difference in their life. For starters, I've linked you to the Chit-Chat page of the Shykids.com website (a resource you will want to become more familiar with over time). This particular page offers simple suggestions kids can use to start conversations on the bus or standing in the school lunch line.

Additionally, I've included some exercises you might try in the classroom (*Classroom Exercises*). As you will see, there's nothing particularly special about them. What's more, I'm confident that, armed with an increasingly better understanding of shyness and the principles that help children overcome it, you will come up with exercises that are better suited to your particular classroom on your own. I include these exercises largely, because we need to start somewhere and, because things as simple as these can make a huge difference in a shy child's life.

I will be adding more tips and references to this section as time permits. I would like to include your ideas as much as possible. Please email your suggestions. I thank you in advance for your help.

6. **Educate Parents.** One of the most important things educational professionals can do to help shy children is to educate parents about the skills shy children can practice at home that are directly applicable to the classroom situation. I've listed a few below just to get you started.

- Playing games where family members raise their hand to speak.
- Having children read stories to their parents instead of parents reading the stories to them.
- Encouraging children to speak for themselves whenever possible (i.e., when ordering at restaurants, around guests)
7. **Reward Small Improvements.** Most shy children blossom when challenges are broken into manageable chunks. It's their anxiety not their intelligence that gets in their way of their learning. When we break things down into small enough chunks that allow shy children to succeed most of the time and fail some of the time (making it clear that failing is a part of learning) many children learn to gradually overcoming their fears.

8. **Keep an eye out for teasing.** We all know that shy children are more likely to be teased than their more outgoing counterparts. But kids are smart. They know better than to tease and bully another child in front of adults. It should come as no surprise that educational professionals are often the last to know what's going on. What is surprising is that parents and even counselors of children who are being teased are often unaware. While some children are comfortable enough to tell all, scared and/or embarrassed by what's happening to them, many children keep their suffering to themselves---forcing the adults in their lives to pry it out of them after they become increasingly sullen at prospect of going school.

Given that much of the teasing is likely to occur outside of your view, it is unrealistic to think that you will always be able to intervene. All that I ask is that you keep an eye out for the possibility that a shy child is being teased and that you do whatever you can to help should you discover that there is a problem. Many of the shy adults I in my practice, still describe the emotional scars from their youth as is they were reliving the teasing today.

While I don't know of a sure fire solution to the problem of teasing, I did stumble on one book that I think is particularly helpful. *Sticks and Stones: 7 Ways Your Child Can Deal With Teasing, Conflict, and Other Hard Times* by Scott Cooper (see [Recommended Readings](#)) provides parents with specific examples of things they can do to help their children become less attractive to bullies.
Because teasing is such a difficult topic and because I certainly don’t have all the answers, I’d like to enlist your help gathering tips to share with parents and other educational professionals so that we can begin to deal with teasing more constructively. Please email your suggestions to me at Teasing Tips so that I can collate them and pass them on to others.

Classroom Exercises

The key to developing exercises to help shy children is to choose activities that provide a structure for shy children to interact with other children without having to worry about what it is they are supposed to do. Exercises best suited for this tend to 1) teach simple skills that are easy for children to learn, 2) involve small groups that promote rapid turn taking, 3) require that everyone take turns playing each role, and 4) allow more than one child to be active at a time. Note—shy children become particularly vulnerable to anxiety while waiting to take their turn.

I’ve listed three exercises below to give you a feel for the kinds of exercises that tend to benefit shy children while having merit for the classroom as a whole. However, some shy children—particularly those struggling with Social Phobia—may even find these exercises too threatening and you may need to start with something smaller.

1. **What do we have in common?**
   
   **Purpose:** To help students learn to recognize things they have in common.
   
   **Instructions:** Pair up students and give them the job of finding out what they have in common. When working with younger children, it’s a good idea to give them some ground rules (e.g., only positive comments are allowed) as well as potential topic areas to explore (e.g., favorite food, hobbies, places they’ve been, etc) or they’re likely to come up with typical kid-like responses like “We both think Suzie’s got a fat face” or “We both like to squish bugs with our teeth.” Creative responses aside, this exercise is particularly useful because it challenges children (shy and non-shy alike) to see what they have in common and is the precursor to more adult versions of small talk.

2. **Chiefs & Indians . . .**
   
   **Purpose:** Create a situation where shy children are challenged to participate in both a leadership and a follower role.
   
   **Instructions:** Assign students to groups of two and then pick an age appropriate task or game (e.g., building a fort, playing pickup sticks, painting a picture, planning a trip, etc). Assign one person in the group the role of Chief and the other person as the role of Indian. The Chief’s job will be to be a leader/participant while motivating the
Indian. The Indian’s job will be to be a constructive follower. Periodically blow a whistle, beat on a drum or whatever moves you to signal that it’s time for group members to change roles (i.e., the Indian becomes the Chief and the Chief becomes the Indian). Repeat as often as time allows, having children change partners from time to time. Note - when asking children to change partners, make sure you have a rule for how they will be assigned as shy children tend to be left behind—obviously defeating the purpose of the exercise.

3. Introduction Time . . .

Purpose: To provide shy students with the opportunity to feel more comfortable with their fellow students while learning social skills that benefit everyone.

Instructions: Set aside a social skills training time as part of your monthly and/or weekly classroom routine. Teach the entire class how to shake hands, introduce themselves to others and introduce other students to each other. The key is to structure your lessons in a way that everyone has a task to do—that way shy children can’t avoid participating. Let me give you some examples.

- **Introducing yourself to a group . . .** Break the class into groups of four to six students and have each student introduce him/herself to the other students as follows:

  Choose one student in each group to start. Have that student introduce him/herself to everyone else in the group as follows: Say “Hi, my name is _____,” extend his/her hand to each person in the group one by one and shake hands. Meanwhile everyone everyone else in the group, will respond, “I'm ______,” followed by a reciprocal handshake. Rotate around the group until each student has had a chance to introduce him/herself to everyone else.

- **Introducing others . . .** Assign each student to a buddy by randomly breaking up students into groups of two (note one group may need to have three buddies if there is an odd number of students in the classroom). Make larger groups of four to six students by combining groups of buddies. Next, have each buddy introduce his/her buddy to the rest of the group.

  “John, I’d like you to meet Harry.” John’s buddy points to Harry and Harry and John extend their hands and shake hands while Harry says “Nice to meet you.” “I'd like you to meet Susan.” Buddy points to Susan. Susan says “It’s a
pleasure to meet you.” and they both shake hands and so on until everyone has been introduced to John.

The process is then repeated until each person has had an opportunity to introduce his/buddy to the entire group.

Helpful Websites . . .

I myself am disappointed in this section, but I hope to improve it over time. The problem is, there presently aren’t very many good sites addressing shyness in the classroom on the internet. As with other aspects of this site, I welcome your input regarding sites you would recommend. In the meantime, you may want to check out some of the sites listed on the Shyness in Children & Teens section of the Shyness Websites page of this website.

**BullyingStop.com** I’m not sure who sponsors this site, but it’s packed with links to references on a problem that can be particularly devastating for shy children. Those of you have the patience to sort through the vast array links presented here, may be alarmed to learn about the magnitude and severity of bullying that takes place in the schools.

**Cooperative Learning Network** This is the “Teaching Social Skills” page of the Cooperative Learning Network. I like it because it lists a variety of skills that, when taught to the classroom as a whole, can benefit everyone.

**Education World** Overall a wonderful site full of teaching resources from lesson plans and subject resources to message boards and an international school directory. They even have a career center. I've linked you to a page that lists ten simple classroom games, at least three of which are likely to help you promote class participation by shy children. These include *Silence, Piecing the Puzzle* and *Four Corners*. Games to avoid include games in which children have the opportunity to pick other children to involve in the game, like *Seven Corners* and *Password*.

**Helping shy pupils break out of shell** Recognizing the importance of helping young children build confidence early in their educational experience, this British program strives to help shy and quiet children feel more comfortable in classroom settings.

**Helping Young Children Overcome Shyness** by John Malouff  This article offers a nice reminder of small common sense things we can do that make a big difference in the lives of shy children.
How Can Teachers Help Shy Students? Interview with shyness expert, Lynn Kelly, emphasizing tips for helping shy children become more communicative in the classroom.

Kids' self esteem may not be evident to parent, teachers. This article summarizes research findings that most shy children already know—that having adults underestimate their shyness only makes a bad situation worse.

LDOnline A great find, Learning Disabilities Online provides a wealth of information on learning disabilities of all kinds. I've linked you to the Social Skills page of the site and while, technically, being shy is not considered a learning disability, it clearly sets children apart from their peers and makes learning that much harder. Besides, children with learning disabilities often become shy as they struggle with embarrassment over their failures in class. I've also linked you to a sample of what dyslexic children see when they struggle to read (dyslexia sample), as I found it to be an excellent reminder of hard school can be for children who are different in any way.

Out of the Blue, Ltd. With the exception of books and tapes, I don't usually recommend commercial websites or products, but I've included this site because it sparks my creativity and gets me thinking about ways to interest shy children in activities that, hopefully, will spark their interest too (e.g., juggling, magic, science). Now, I know that as teachers, you don't have time to incorporate individual games, hobbies or activities into your curriculum, but it's my hope that you might encourage parents to encourage their children to try activities like these—particularly activities that capture the interests of their classmates as well—providing shy children with a tool to help them break the social ice and make friends.

Now I haven't actually ordered anything from this particular site yet. That's on my "to do list," but the idea of teaching shy children magic tricks or interesting them in practical science or age appropriate crafts—things they can try at home and then share with their classmates—is a great way to help shy children learn to be more social.

Painfully Shy: Tips for Teachers This site is presented by Barbara and Gregory Markway, authors of Painfully Shy, one of the better books that has been written on shyness. The page I've directed you to includes tips for teachers, but you may want to take a look at some of their other pages as well—particularly their Links page.
Quiet Children in the Classroom: On Helping Not Hurting  A real food for thought piece by James C. McCroskey, this article outlines ways in which teachers' efforts to help "quiet children" in the classroom may actually do harm. While his cautions and recommendations for helping "quiet children" may be overly restrictive for the enterprising teacher (i.e., I encourage you to read additional references and explore a more proactive approach than he recommends in many cases), McCroskey's concerns about lumping "quiet children" into one homogeneous group and thoughts about the kinds of diagnostic categories these children may fall into are well worth the read.

Research News  In her article, Kids’ self esteem may not be evident to parent, teachers, Katie Meyer, summarizes research conducted by Ann Evans, Renata Bzdrya and Andrea Spooner comparing fifth and sixth graders' perceptions of their shyness and self-esteem with the perceptions of their parents and teachers.

Shykids.com  This website is a gift. Staffed by, and I quote, “former shy kids, blossoming shy kids and parents helping them along the way,” this website is filled with a wealth of information that shy kids, and adults for that matter, can relate to. However, I do take exception with one very important premise of the website to which Shykids devotes an entire page which they entitle “Stop The Lablels.” PLEASE DON'T! It's not the labels that are the problem. It's our interpretation of the labels. For now, please see the discussion on the Tips For “Shaking Your Shyness” page of this website. I will be adding a separate section addressing labels as they apply to shy children as time permits. In all other respects, I think this is a fabulous must visit site.

Shyness and Children's Vocabulary  This research study conducted by Cozier at Cardiff University speaks to the concern frequently brought to me by parents---e.g., "My son's teacher says he can't read, but he reads just fine at home. He's just scared." Accurately assessing academic achievement of shy children is a difficult task as their performance is sometimes compromised by their anxiety. Be sure to scroll down to the bottom of the abstract for the link to the full article (note--this is a PDF file so my link may not work for you and you will need to go to the article with the above link).

Teaching Students Who Are Shy or Withdrawn  This short summary presented by the Kinder Art website offers a convenient reminder of the key points offered by Brophy listed above.
What if a Lion Won't Roar? Ways Teachers Can Help Young Students Overcome Shyness  Another article by John Malouff (see Helping Young Children Overcome Shyness above) specifically designed for teachers, offering tips to help shy children in your classroom, as well as insight into other conditions that can masquerade as shyness.

Working with Shy or Withdrawn Students  by Jere Brophy  Another great article from Eric Education & Information Resources, offering tips for teaching shy children and references for additional information.

Disclaimer . . .

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Make regular contact. It's easy for shy children to fall through the cracks and the farther they fall, the harder it is for them to accept attention when it's given. Making contact with shy children on a regular basis---daily, if possible---helps keep shy
children connected. You don't have to do much---a comment, question or smile can make a big difference. The key is to make contact in a way that doesn't single shy children out as being different.

Give shy children a job to do. Much like shy adults, shy children do better when they have something to do that allows them to: 1) feel like they're making a contribution and 2) have a reason to interact with others---in this case, their fellow students. The trick is to match the level of social interaction of a task with the tolerance level of each child. Some children thrive with no more than a little push. These children often lack the confidence to get started or, in some cases, simply don't know how to approach other children. Any assignment that helps them break the ice may be all they need to get the social ball rolling. Other children require much more support. They are terrified just to be in the classroom and you will need to proceed more cautiously. For these children something as simple as a brief encounter with their teacher is enough to send them reeling.

I've listed some tasks below in order of increasing difficulty---although sometimes it's hard to tell what will or won't be difficult for a particular child.

Closing the classroom door when the bell rings

Straightening up the room after class

Passing out/collecting papers

Working in a small group on a teacher assigned project
Taking a survey of other students during down times (e.g., recess, study periods, etc) requiring that shy children go up to and interact with other children in a teacher assigned role.

As you can see, the first task requires little or no interaction with anything but the door. This is quite deliberate as it allows a child to participate in class without having to interact with other children or the teacher---but even this task may be too threatening for particularly anxious children. At the other extreme, is the last task which requires that a child go up to his/her fellow classmates and initiate a question and answer period. As I’m sure you know, it’s best to come up with tasks that fit into your normal classroom routine and can be maintained with little or no disruption to your regular classroom regimen.

One word of caution before you begin----assigning tasks to shy children works best when you also assign tasks to other children who are not shy. Shy children may be uncomfortable, but they’re rarely dumb. They can usually spot a job that was created just for them and so can their classmates ---further drawing attention to the shy child’s self-consciousness and classroom agony. Properly executed, however, tasks such as these can make a lifetime of difference in a shy child’s world.

Comment on their successes and post their work. Most shy children crave attention, but dread it at the same time. They want to feel special, but have difficulty being in the limelight. Posting their work in prominent places in the classroom can be a big boost to their self-esteem, just as commenting on their accomplishments in front of the class can make a huge difference.
Compliments, however, must be given with care. When dealing with children that shun attention, it's best to use a hit and run approach to compliments---that is, to offer a compliment, then immediately move to another subject. Don't give them the opportunity to struggle or even think about what they need to do to respond or, if the compliment was made in front of the entire class, don't leave enough time for the class to turn and look at the student. Simply move forward knowing that a good deed has been done.

Example:

A student comes up to your desk to ask a question. You notice they have an interesting item of clothing or their hair looks particularly nice. Simply compliment them and move on to the business at hand.

"Great sweatshirt. I really like it. So what can I do for you?"

When dealing with very shy children, it may be best to avoid eye contact until you sense that the child is able to respond comfortably. This may take anywhere from one to several encounters. And by all means, don't wait for a response to your compliment! If they give one, fine. Go with it. But don't wait. That defeats the purpose of this exercise.
Finally, never compliment children about things you don't mean. It only confuses them in the long run.

Help Children Learn To Initiate Contact With Others. Walking up to a stranger or even a friend can be difficult for an adult, but for a shy child, it's nothing less than torture. Most shy children dream of being able to run up to a group of kids on the playground and join in, but they literally don't know how. Instead, they wait for someone to ask them to play or pretend that they're not interested.

Anything you do to promote a shy child's ability to initiate contact with others can make a huge difference in their life. For starters, I've linked you to the Chit-Chat page of the Shykids.com website (a resource you will want to become more familiar with over time). This particular page offers simple suggestions kids can use to start conversations on the bus or standing in the school lunch line.

Additionally, I've included some exercises you might try in the classroom (Classroom Exercises). As you will see, there's nothing particularly special about them. What's more, I'm confident that, armed with an increasingly better understanding of shyness and the principles that help children overcome it, you will come up with exercises that are better suited to your particular classroom on your own. I include these exercises largely, because we need to start somewhere and, because things as simple as these can make a huge difference in a shy child's life.
I will be adding more tips and references to this section as time permits. I would like to include your ideas as much as possible. Please email your suggestions. I thank you in advance for your help.

Educate Parents. One of the most important the things educational professionals can do to help shy children is to educate parents about the skills shy children can practice at home that are directly applicable to the classroom situation. I’ve listed a few below just to get you started.

Playing games where family members raise their hand to speak.

Having children read stories to their parents instead of parents reading the stories to them.

Encouraging children to speak for themselves whenever possible (i.e., when ordering at restaurants, around guests)

Putting on plays and skits for other family members at home on a regular basis.

Practicing social skills.

For more information on things parents can do to help shy children, see the Parenting The Shy Child page of this website.

Reward Small Improvements. Most shy children blossom when challenges are broken into manageable chunks. It’s their anxiety not their intelligence that gets in their way of their learning. When we break things down into small enough chunks that allow shy children to succeed most of the time and fail some of the time (making it clear that failing is a part of learning) many children learn to gradually overcoming their fears.
Keep an eye out for teasing. We all know that shy children are more likely to be teased than their more outgoing counterparts. But kids are smart. They know better than to tease and bully another child in front of adults. It should come as no surprise that educational professionals are often the last to know what's going on. What is surprising is that parents and even counselors of children who are being teased are often unaware. While some children are comfortable enough to tell all, scared and/or embarrassed by what's happening to them, many children keep their suffering to themselves—forcing the adults in their lives to pry it out of them after they become increasingly sullen at prospect of going school.

Given that much of the teasing is likely to occur outside of your view, it is unrealistic to think that you will always be able to intervene. All that I ask is that you keep an eye out for the possibility that a shy child is being teased and that you do whatever you can to help should you discover that there is a problem. Many of the shy adults I in my practice, still describe the emotional scars from their youth as is they were reliving the teasing today.

While I don't know of a sure fire solution to the problem of teasing, I did stumble on one book that I think is particularly helpful. *Sticks and Stones: 7 Ways Your Child Can Deal With Teasing, Conflict, and Other Hard Times* by Scott Cooper (see Recommended Readings) provides parents with specific examples of things they can do to help their children become less attractive to bullies.
Because teasing is such a difficult topic and because I certainly don’t have all the answers, I’d like to enlist your help gathering tips to share with parents and other educational professionals so that we can begin to deal with teasing more constructively. Please email your suggestions to me at Teasing Tips so that I can collate them and pass them on to others.

Classroom Exercises

The key to developing exercises to help shy children is to choose activities that provide a structure for shy children to interact with other children without having to worry about what it is they are supposed to do. Exercises best suited for this this tend to 1) teach simple skills that are easy for children to learn, 2) involve small groups that promote rapid turn taking, 3) require that everyone take turns playing each role, and 4) allow more than one child to be active at a time. Note—shy children become particularly vulnerable to anxiety while waiting to take their turn.

I’ve listed three exercises below to give you a feel for the kinds of exercises that tend to benefit shy children while having merit for the classroom as a whole. However, some shy children—particularly those struggling with Social Phobia—may even find these exercises too threatening and you may need to start with something smaller.

What do we have in common?

Purpose: To help students learn to recognize things they have in common.

Instructions: Pair up students and give them the job of finding out what they have in common. When working with younger children, it’s a good idea to give them some
ground rules (e.g., only positive comments are allowed) as well as potential topic areas to explore (e.g., favorite food, hobbies, places they've been, etc) or they're likely to come up with typical kid-like responses like "We both think Suzie's got a fat face" or "We both like to squish bugs with our teeth." Creative responses aside, this exercise is particularly useful because it challenges children (shy and non-shy alike) to see what they have in common and is the precursor to more adult versions of small talk.

**Chiefs & Indians . . . Purpose:** Create a situation where shy children are challenged to participate in both a leadership and a follower role.

**Instructions:** Assign students to groups of two and then pick an age appropriate task or game (e.g., building a fort, playing pickup sticks, painting a picture, planning a trip, etc). Assign one person in the group the role of Chief and the other person as the role of Indian. The Chief's job will be to be a leader/participant while motivating the Indian. The Indian's job will be to be a constructive follower. Periodically blow a whistle, beat on a drum or whatever moves you to signal that it's time for group members to change roles (i.e., the Indian becomes the Chief and the Chief becomes the Indian). Repeat as often as time allows, having children change partners from time to time. Note - when asking children to change partners, make sure you have a rule for how they will be assigned as shy children tend to be left behind---obviously defeating the purpose of the exercise.

**Introduction Time . . .**
Purpose: To provide shy students with the opportunity to feel more comfortable with their fellow students while learning social skills that benefit everyone.

Instructions: Set aside a social skills training time as part of your monthly and/or weekly classroom routine. Teach the entire class how to shake hands, introduce themselves to others and introduce other students to each other. The key is to structure your lessons in a way that everyone has a task to do—-that way shy children can't avoid participating. Let me give you some examples.

Introducing yourself to a group . . . Break the class into groups of four to six students and have each student introduce him/herself to the other students as follows:

Choose one student in each group to start. Have that student introduce him/herself to everyone else in the group as follows: Say "Hi, my name is _____," extend his/her hand to each person in the group one by one and shake hands. Meanwhile everyone everyone else in the group, will respond, "I'm _____," followed by a reciprocal handshake. Rotate around the group until each student has had a chance to introduce him/herself to everyone else.

Introducing others . . . Assign each student to a buddy by randomly breaking up students into groups of two (note one group may need to have three buddies if there is an odd number of students in the classroom). Make larger groups of four to six students by combining groups of buddies. Next, have each buddy introduce his/her buddy to the rest of the group.

"John, I'd like you to meet Harry." John's buddy points to Harry and Harry and John extend their hands and shake hands while Harry says "Nice to meet you." "I'd like you to meet Susan." Buddy points to
Susan. Susan says "It's a pleasure to meet you." and they both shake hands and so on until everyone has been introduced to John.

The process is then repeated until each person has had an opportunity to introduce his/buddy to the entire group.

Helpful Websites . . .

I myself am disappointed in this section, but I hope to improve it over time. The problem is, there presently aren't very many good sites addressing shyness in the classroom on the internet. As with other aspects of this site, I welcome your input regarding sites you would recommend. In the meantime, you may want to check out some of the sites listed on the Shyness in Children & Teens section of the Shyness Websites page of this website.

**BullyingStop.com** I'm not sure who sponsors this site, but it's packed with links to references on a problem that can be particularly devastating for shy children. Those of you have the patience to sort through the vast array links presented here, may be alarmed to learn about the magnitude and severity of bullying that takes place in the schools.

**Cooperative Learning Network** This is the "Teaching Social Skills" page of the Cooperative Learning Network. I like it because it lists a variety of skills that, when taught to the classroom as a whole, can benefit everyone.

**Education World** Overall a wonderful site full of teaching resources from lesson plans and subject resources to message boards and an international school directory. They even have a career center. I've linked you to a page
that lists ten simple classroom games, at least three of which are likely to help you promote class participation by shy children. These include Silence, Piecing the Puzzle and Four Corners. Games to avoid include games in which children have the opportunity to pick other children to involve in the game, like Seven Corners and Password.

Helping shy pupils break out of shell  Recognizing the importance of helping young children build confidence early in their educational experience, this British program strives to help shy and quiet children feel more comfortable in classroom settings.

Helping Young Children Overcome Shyness by John Malouff  This article offers a nice reminder of small common sense things we can do that make a big difference in the lives of shy children.

How Can Teachers Help Shy Students? Interview with shyness expert, Lynn Kelly, emphasizing tips for helping shy children become more communicative in the classroom.

Kids’ self esteem may not be evident to parent, teachers. This article summarizes research findings that most shy children already know--that having adults underestimate their shyness only makes a bad situation worse.

LDOnline  A great find, Learning Disabilities Online provides a wealth of information on learning disabilities of all kinds. I’ve linked you to the Social Skills page of the site and while, technically, being shy is not considered a learning disability, it clearly sets children apart from their peers and makes learning that much harder. Besides,
children with learning disabilities often become shy as they struggle with embarrassment over their failures in class. I've also linked you to a sample of what dyslexic children see when they struggle to read (dyslexia sample), as I found it to be an excellent reminder of hard school can be for children who are different in any way.

Out of the Blue, Ltd. With the exception of books and tapes, I don't usually recommend commercial websites or products, but I've included this site because it sparks my creativity and gets me thinking about ways to interest shy children in activities that, hopefully, will spark their interest too (e.g., juggling, magic, science). Now, I know that as teachers, you don't have time to incorporate individual games, hobbies or activities into your curriculum, but it's my hope that you might encourage parents to encourage their children to try activities like these---particularly activities that capture the interests of their classmates as well---providing shy children with a tool to help them break the social ice and make friends.

Now I haven't actually ordered anything from this particular site yet. That's on my "to do list," but the idea of teaching shy children magic tricks or interesting them in practical science or age appropriate crafts--things they can try at home and then share with their classmates--is a great way to help shy children learn to be more social.

Painfully Shy: Tips for Teachers This site is presented by Barbara and Gregory Markway, authors of Painfully Shy, one of the better books that has been written on shyness. The page I've directed you to includes tips for teachers, but you may want to take a look at some of their other pages as well---particularly their Links page.
Quiet Children in the Classroom: On Helping Not Hurting  A real food for thought piece by James C. McCroskey, this article outlines ways in which teachers' efforts to help "quiet children" in the classroom may actually do harm. While his cautions and recommendations for helping "quiet children" may be overly restrictive for the enterprising teacher (i.e., I encourage you to read additional references and explore a more proactive approach than he recommends in many cases), McCroskey's concerns about lumping "quiet children" into one homogeneous group and thoughts about the kinds of diagnostic categories these children may fall into are well worth the read.

Research News  In her article, Kids' self esteem may not be evident to parent, teachers, Katie Meyer, summarizes research conducted by Ann Evans, Renata Bzdrya and Andrea Spooner comparing fifth and sixth graders' perceptions of their shyness and self-esteem with the perceptions of their parents and teachers.

Shykids.com  This website is a gift. Staffed by, and I quote, "former shy kids, blossoming shy kids and parents helping them along the way," this website is filled with a wealth of information that shy kids, and adults for that matter, can relate to. However, I do take exception with one very important premise of the website to which Shykids devotes an entire page which they entitle "Stop The Labels."  PLEASE DON'T! It's not the labels that are the problem. It's our interpretation of the labels. For now, please see the discussion on the Tips For "Shaking Your Shyness" page of this website. I will be adding a separate section addressing labels as they apply to shy children as
time permits. In all other respects, I think this is a fabulous must visit site.

**Shyness and Children's Vocabulary**  This research study conducted by Cozier at Cardiff University speaks to the concern frequently brought to me by parents---e.g., "My son's teacher says he can't read, but he reads just fine at home. He's just scared." Accurately assessing academic achievement of shy children is a difficult task as their performance is sometimes compromised by their anxiety. Be sure to scroll down to the bottom of the abstract for the link to the [full article](#) (note--this is a PDF file so my link may not work for you and you will need to go to the article with the above link).

**Teaching Students Who Are Shy or Withdrawn**  This short summary presented by the Kinder Art website offers a convenient reminder of the key points offered by Brophy listed above.

**What if a Lion Won't Roar? Ways Teachers Can Help Young Students Overcome Shyness**  Another article by John Malouff (see Helping Young Children Overcome Shyness above) specifically designed for teachers, offering tips to help shy children in your classroom, as well as insight into other conditions that can masquerade as shyness.

**Working with Shy or Withdrawn Students** by Jere Brophy  Another great article from Eric Education & Information Resources, offering tips for teaching shy children and references for additional information.

**Disclaimer**
Among students who are (compared to their peers) inactive in the classroom, many are well adjusted academically and socially but relatively quiet and content to work independently. Some are problematically shy or withdrawn in varying degrees, and a few may be
headed toward schizophrenia. This digest focuses on the middle range of such students, who are commonly described as SHY (inhibited, lacking in confidence, socially anxious) or WITHDRAWN (unresponsive, uncommunicative, or daydreaming).

A degree of shyness is normal whenever social expectations are new or ambiguous. Shyness begins to emerge as a problem if it becomes not merely situational but dispositional, so that the child is LABELED as shy. Especially if the child internalizes this label, a generalized pattern of shyness may become established and begin to include such additional symptoms as diffidence about entering social situations, discomfort and inhibition in the presence of others, exaggerated self-concern, and increasingly negative social self-concepts (Honig, 1987; Thompson & Rudolph, 1992).

VARIEDIES AND CAUSES OF SHYNESS AND WITHDRAWAL IN THE CLASSROOM

Symptoms of shyness or withdrawal may appear as part of the student’s overall personality or as a situation-
specific response to a particular stress factor. Children are especially susceptible to self-consciousness in social situations that make them feel conspicuous and psychologically unprotected. Other types of social unresponsiveness may result from specific experiences or environmental causes. Some children have not developed effective conversational skills because their parents seldom converse with them or respond positively to their verbal initiations, and they have not had much opportunity to interact with peers. This circumstance may explain some of the shyness seen in kindergarten and first grade. Children starting school for the first time may exhibit SCHOOL PHOBIA (usually fear of the unknown or unwillingness to be separated from the parent, rather than a specific negative reaction to the teacher or the school). Social anxiety can also develop as an ongoing reaction to repeated failure, mistreatment, or rejection from adults or peers. Some students may show good peer group adjustment and ability to interact socially with the teacher, but they may display communication
apprehension when asked to answer academic questions, perform in public, or engage in an activity that they know will be evaluated. Finally, many students experience at least temporary social adjustment problems when they change schools or classes.

SUGGESTED STRATEGIES FOR COPING WITH SHY OR WITHDRAWN STUDENTS

Strategies for coping with shy or withdrawn students include peer involvement, teacher interventions, and other kinds of psychological interventions.

PEER INVOLVEMENT. Several authors have suggested treating shyness and withdrawal through peer involvement (see Rosenberg et al., 1992, for a review). Such efforts might include involving shy students in cross-age tutoring programs, creating opportunities for them to play in pairs with younger children, enlisting peers as confederates to draw out withdrawn children, and involving them in small group,
cooperative classroom activities.

TEACHER INTERVENTIONS. Brophy (1995) surveyed effective teachers to find out how they responded to shy students. The most commonly mentioned responses included (1) changing the social environment (e.g., seating them among friendly classmates or assigning them to a partner or small group), (2) encouraging or shaping increased responsiveness, (3) minimizing stress or embarrassment, (4) engaging shy students in special activities, and (5) involving them in frequent private talks. Conspicuously absent from these teachers' responses was emphasis on threat or punishment.

OTHER INTERVENTIONS. Blanco and Bogacki's (1988) recommendations from school psychologists for coping with general student shyness or withdrawal echo many of these same themes. They suggested encouraging children to join volunteer groups or recreational organizations outside of school; involving them frequently in small-group, cooperative interaction with peers; using them as peer tutors;
determining their peer preferences and seating them near preferred peers; leading but not forcing them to communicate; avoiding putting them in situations that would be embarrassing or frightening; and assigning them to messenger roles or other tasks that require communication. For students whose withdrawal symptoms include excessive daydreaming, researchers suggest calling on them frequently, standing near them to ensure attention, making sure that they get started successfully on their assignment at the beginning of work time rather than scolding them for daydreaming, stressing the need for attention and participation, and assigning partners to work with them and keep them involved. The following specific teacher strategies for coping with shy or withdrawn students are suggested by the work of several researchers over the last two decades (Honig, 1987; McIntyre, 1989; Thompson & Rudolph, 1992; Brophy, 1995):

*use interest inventories to determine interests of shy students, then follow up by using these interests as bases for conversations
or learning activities;

*display their (good) artwork or assignments for others to see in the classroom;

*assign them as a partner to, or promote their friendship with, a classmate who is popular and engages in frequent contact with peers;

*check with these students frequently if they are prone to daydreaming;

*help shy children to set social development goals and assist them by providing training in assertiveness, initiating interactions with peers, or other social skills;

*provide them with information needed to develop social insight (e.g., explaining that new students often have trouble making friends at first, or that teasing does not necessarily mean that peers do not like you), suggesting ways for them to initiate productive peer contacts or to respond more effectively to peer initiations;

*provide them with a designated role
that will give them something to do and cause them to interact with others in social situations in which they might otherwise become shy and retreat to the fringes of the group;

*teach them social "door openers" for greeting others and speaking to them in person or on the telephone, especially assertive requests ("Can I play, too?");

*make time to talk with them each day, even if just for a few minutes, and listen carefully and respond specifically to what they tell you; and

*use bibliotherapy materials such as "The Shy Little Girl," a story by P. Krasilovsky about a sad and shy girl who becomes more outgoing.

Shy children may need direct instruction in social skills, such as those included in various social skills training programs intended for elementary school students. For more information on such programs, including a description of a program that included collaboration between teachers and parents, see Sheridan, Kratochwill, and Elliott (1990).
CONCLUSION

Teachers may be able to help shy and withdrawn students considerably by using strategies that are relatively easy to implement and well matched to the teacher’s basic role as a helpful instructor to students. These strategies include providing self-concept support, encouragement, and opportunities to develop confidence and comfort in the classroom to shy and inhibited students, as well as closer monitoring, improved nonverbal communication, environmental engineering, and instructive suggestions or demands for improved concentration designed to maintain the attention of students prone to withdrawal or daydreaming. Most teachers seem to develop an intuitive understanding of some of the needs of shy or withdrawn students, but many could meet these needs more effectively by systematically applying the principles and strategies highlighted here.

This digest was adapted from: Brophy, Jere. (1996). Teaching Problem Students. New York, Guilford. Adapted with permission.
REFERENCES


LEARNING PROBLEMS. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.


Portfolio Strategy Sheet #5

9. Name of method or strategy:
   ""

10. When is this method or strategy useful?
It is useful to summarize students’ background knowledge, teaches to select new information from the read text by organizing it into the chart, and develops curiosity in students.

11. What are the steps involved in using this strategy or method?

➢ Teacher asks students to write a theme of the lesson and to draw a table with 3 cells:

12. When will this method or strategy be useful in your setting?

This method can be applied to any lesson as an effective tool of summarizing students’ background knowledge of a definite theme. It teaches to read a text thoughtfully and attentively. It develops critical thinking of students.