

A No-Paper Day

By Karen Nuessle

From August to June teachers put their families on automatic pilot to care for the needs of other people's children. Their thoughts, their energies, their goals center on school.

Even when they are not in the classroom, teachers are correcting, researching, thinking about getting back into the classroom.

However, teachers can get so caught up in teaching every hour of every day that they never get finished. So where do teachers draw a line that allows time with their families and still lets them feel as though they are doing the best job they can?

The classroom itself is a good place to start. Reams of research have been conducted on organizing the classroom for better efficiency. However, I'm always skeptical when I read an article that suggests some cure-all. What works for someone else rarely works for me unless I personalize it, and what I have personalized probably won't work for you. But here's an idea that *will* work.

Each week I choose one day that I call "no-paper day." There are no papers to correct. Workbooks stay in desks. The pencil sharpener remains silent. Even the crayon box rarely gets raided on this day. Sounds interesting? Then read on.

But, wait—Do I hear groans from teachers in small schools who think that this idea won't work in a multigrade classroom? I'm a multigrade teacher too (grades 1-3). The ideas I propose will fit *any* grade level because they are so broad.

Everyone likes my no-paper day. When I ask my students to take extra

personal responsibility that day to make it work, they cooperate because they like to do away with paper as much as I do.

At first I didn't have a whole day without paper. I tried a morning or an afternoon, using the idea as a special treat for good behavior. However, the children didn't realize it was a reward (plus a nice break from correcting their work) for me as well. Now I have one whole day each week as "no-paper day."

How It Works

Here is how the no-paper day works for various subjects:

Math: Use small lap blackboards. I found a stack of unused lapboards waiting for me in my classroom when I arrived. They were homemade, masonite covered with green board paint.

The children each bring a sock from home to use as an eraser. Socks are stored in each child's desk. I supply a piece of chalk to store in each sock.

When I pass out blackboards everyone knows what we are going to do. I stay in one spot giving problems to work; they hold up the boards so that I can see which ones have the correct answer. We use the boards for teaching number place, labeling word problems, and for other number functions.

I use a lot of math games on this day as well as flashcards, and I let everyone choose partners. We use clocks for drilling, even at the listening center. Paper plates make great clock faces. The children position the hands and hold them up so that I can see what is happening.

We do a lot of action games, too, such as oral counting by 2's, 3's, and 4's. These games provide terrific practice for written work and help increase retention

for children with a variety of learning styles.

On no-paper day it isn't exactly quiet in my classroom, but the children do learn and have fun, too.

Reading: On no-paper day we have oral book reports, team reading (when two people form a group and read to each other), and reading games in which two or more players learn about inference, library skills, drawing conclusions, and recognizing context clues. Some of these games I have devised myself, others I have purchased.

We also do some role playing and share our favorite stories. One activity we like to do requires dividing the children into groups of four (I have 30 students) and creating stories by cutting out magazine pictures and placing them on a long strip of paper. Each team makes up a story, keeping what they are doing a secret. The groups then trade strips. They then are required to think up a story to match the new picture strip and share it orally. Afterward, the group that created each strip tells the story they originally intended.

Bible: Story records and tapes, charades, and Bible labs are part of this no-paper day. Bible labs teach the children

how to share their faith. Because of my large group a maximum of five leave on this day with a volunteer parent to do some missionary activity outside the classroom. Children who remain in the classroom make cookies, bread, or cupcakes to take to new parents, older folks, shut-ins, new Adventists, or people just moving into the area. The groups involved in baking and visiting rotate from week to week. They include a mixture of grades so older and younger children, as well as boys and girls, participate in each group.

Crayons sometimes come out during this time to make welcome or get-well cards. We have also written letters to student missionaries. This is always a special highlight of our no-paper day.

Language: I use the Dover Oral Language Program every day, but on no-paper day we do a few more exercises than usual. I use "throwaway" five-minute activities that are fun for the children and beneficial in preparing them for their standardized tests. I write sentences without punctuation on the board, and the children have to punctuate them properly. Throughout the day, I emphasize language usage.

Occasionally on no-paper day I have a

"berry note day." This is the only time I allow note writing. I give each child a paper sack with his name on it to place on his desk. The children then write notes to tell their classmates how "berry, berry" nice they are. It's still no-paper day because I don't correct these notes!

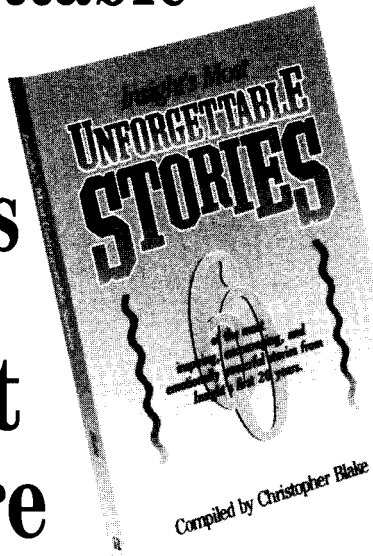
Another activity the children enjoy is creative writing time. This also requires paper. During this period we specifically write to share with the group. I generally provide a story starter of some kind, but the students develop their own story and share before the group. What makes this a "no-paper" activity is that I don't collect the papers or correct them. However, the activity guarantees that every child will share, as well as do some writing and creative thinking.

Spelling: A spelldown is an exciting occasion. Every student participates, but I use words on each child's grade level, moving to higher levels as people are eliminated. Some years I don't use this activity because the children struggle with spelling, but when the group spells well on the whole, we have a spelldown every two months or so.

We use drill time to learn how to spell the days of the week and the months of

Continued on page 47

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²² Phi Delta Kappan Task Force, *Responding to Adolescent Suicide*.

²³ J. Sorenson, "Responding to Student or Teacher Death: Preplanning Crisis Intervention," *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 67 (March 1989), pp. 426-442.

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²⁵ From The New King James Version. Copyright© 1979, 1980, 1982, Thomas Nelson, Inc., Publishers.

BUILDING FAITH IN THE COLLEGE RELIGION CLASS

Continued from page 29

naturally to spiritual sharing.

As we have noted, Western cultures privatize religion. Our youth need to recognize this cultural prohibition. Through skillful teaching and the infusion of the Spirit, they will overcome this prohibition to witnessing.

Not until the goal of outreach becomes paramount in Bible classes will our students achieve God's ultimate purpose for their lives. We fall short if our Bible classes become mired in urbane theoretical discussions of theological and ethical questions. We must inspire our students to translate inner commitment into a shared faith that commends itself to unbelievers and nominal Christians.

As we seek to accomplish this goal, our Bible classes will become what God really intends them to be—centers where faith is deepened and from which students depart with a sense of urgency to share their joy in Christ. □

Dr. George W. Reid is Director of the Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland. Before assuming his position at BRI, Dr. Reid taught at Southwestern Adventist College, Keene, Texas, and served as Associate Editor of the Adventist Review.

WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM: THE ACCENT IS ON LEARNING

Continued from page 33

lum, will ensure an educational environment in which good writing is valued. Correctness will follow as everyone becomes engaged in creating meaning and enhancing learning through writing. □

Dr. Judith Nembhard is Instructional Supervisor of English, District of Columbia Public Schools. She has taught English at the high school level, as well as at Howard University, Washington, D.C., and at Columbia Union College, Takoma Park, Maryland.

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A NO-PAPER DAY

Continued from page 36

the year, and to make exciting or silly word lists that include proper use of suffixes or prefixes. I say the words and let the children write opposites or homonyms on their lapboards. We also use the boards to identify root words, singular or plural words, and to practice using *a* or *an* properly. (As you can tell, I love those small boards!)

Science: On no-paper day, we do a lot of outdoor and extra-credit activities for science. We are always growing, recording, and researching something in the classroom. We have a creek, trees, and a forest behind the school where we do

bark rubbings and water sampling. At schools where there was less outdoor space available we've used the front lawn of the school. We lie on our backs and study cloud formations, and catch grasshoppers or others of God's creatures to study and examine. We often use a microscope to examine the things we find.

Social Studies: Like science, social studies lends itself nicely to a no-paper day. Whatever the topic, something fun can be planned that does not involve paper. Occasionally, this produces more excitement than we had anticipated. When we made papier-mâché whales, a dog came into the room and ran off with one of them!

We've had great fun using compass directions to make up our own games. I ask, "If it is afternoon and you are facing toward the front of the classroom, which way is west?" The children love this game. (I have to be careful that I know the correct direction!)

I've chosen Thursday as my no-paper day. I even have a name for it—"Thrilling Thursday." Although no-paper day is fun, it is more than that. It develops skills students need. Often, because of the noise and unstructured nature of certain activities, we neglect to teach these skills. It's so much easier to keep children busy with paper and workbooks.

No-paper day gives me some breathing space. It gives me time to plan other activities for the coming week. For a little while, at least, it relieves me of the mountain of papers that always seems to be waiting for me. It's a day to rejuvenate my own enthusiasm for teaching and a time to get to know my students better as we share and create.

Even if you don't devote a whole day to no-paper, try it, I'm sure you'll like it. □

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BOOK REVIEWS

Continued from page 36

understand for high school or college students also. Knight's use of illustrative stories clearly explains some very complex theological concepts.

This would be a helpful book for Bible teachers and their students. In fact, I feel everyone should read *My Gripe With God*. I'm looking forward to the sequel, which will deal with what God is willing to do in those who have accepted His offer of grace.

—Dunbar Henri.

Dunbar Henri teaches Bible at Takoma Academy, Takoma Park, Maryland.