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Students: Increase Your Grades... Talk To Your Teachers

By Susan Kruger

Have you ever heard the phrase, "It's all about who you know"? Every adult could probably tell you about some opportunity that arose because they knew the right person at the right time.

As human beings, relationships influence everything we do! Why do you think golf is such an integrated part of the business world? Because golf gives business-people the opportunity to build trust and develop relationships that are vital for successful business deals. This same principle applies in school, too.

I am not suggesting you take your teachers out for a few rounds of golf. However, you can get better grades, and many other benefits, from developing positive relationships with your teachers. First, I will explain WHY you should make the effort to connect with your teachers, then I will give simple suggestions for HOW to do it.

"Why Bother?"

Most middle and high-school teachers see 90-170 students everyday! This makes it impossible for teachers to know and provide individualized attention to everyone. You must stand out in the crowd and make a positive impression!

A positive impression can boost your grades. Most teachers have "participation points" that allows them to add points to students' scores, if they have earned the privilege. For example, when I calculated grades for report cards, several students were only a few points away from earning a higher grade. If a student had been rude or irresponsible in class, I let him keep the grade he earned. However, if he demonstrated that he cared about his work and was a responsible student, I would often add two or three points to increase his grade from, for example, a "B+" to an "A-".

If you have taken the time to make a positive impression on your teachers, they may also be willing to bend the rules for you on occasion. For example, they may extend a due date (once) if you forgot an assignment or give opportunities for extra credit. Many teachers do things like this because we know that the amount of points earned does not always give a complete picture of what a student has

accomplished.

Like the saying, "It's all in who you know," teachers can also open windows of opportunity. They may connect you with business-owners who are looking for part-time employees (many employers ask teachers to recommend reliable candidates), may provide a good letter of recommendation for college applications, or may even take you on a once-in-a-lifetime trip.

My husband is a high-school teacher who takes a small, select group of students to New York for a marketing convention every year. The selection committee chooses students based upon their applications and, most importantly, their reputation. When they are on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange, they cannot risk having a student who may violate national security!

*** Action Plan ***

How do you make a positive impact on your teachers? It is actually quite simple! Try a couple of the following:

- Raise your hand to ask or answer questions at least three times a week.
- If there is something you do not understand in your homework, circle it and ask about it the next day.
- If you are not comfortable raising your hand in front of others, stay after class to ask for clarification on an assignment or to check your grades.
- If you notice a common interest with your teacher, let him know. My husband has a few Star Wars posters in his classroom, which prompts several students to share their interest in Star Wars, too. This has helped my husband initiate conversations with these students before, and even during, class.
- Always be polite to your teachers. Thank them as they pass papers to you, wish them a "good day", or simply give them a smile and say "Hello" anytime you see them.

These simple actions will encourage your teachers to notice you in a positive light and will benefit you in ways you may not realize for a long time!

*** In Conclusion... ***

Teachers have A LOT of students and need you to stand out in the crowd of faces they see each day. Raising your hand, asking questions, being polite, and initiating small conversations with teachers encourages them to notice you in a positive way. As they get to know you, they may help boost your grades or open new opportunities for you.

Helping teachers notice YOU is also very rewarding for your teachers. After all, 99.9% of them went into the profession to make a positive impact, but it is easy to get overwhelmed with so many students. TEACHERS appreciate your efforts to connect with them because your efforts make their days much more rewarding!

Susan Kruger is the author of "SOAR Study Skills; A Simple & Efficient Way to Earn Better Grades in Less Time." Get Susan's FREE Homework Rx Toolkit, featuring "25 Ways to Make Homework Easier...Tonight!", at her website:

<http://soarstudyskills.com/>

Many Denver Schools To Close Campuses During Lunchtime

By Patricia Hawke

Beginning with the fall of 2006 school year, many high schools in the Denver schools system will close their campuses during lunchtime. This means that Denver schools students will not be allowed to leave campus to eat at nearby restaurants, fast foods, and convenience stores.

Denver schools superintendent Michael Bennet introduced the final draft of the new policy, called the Denver Plan, in the spring of 2006. Bennet believes his plan will reduce the increasing afternoon truancy within the high schools.

The Denver schools plan has taken several drafts to reach implementation. The first draft was introduced to Denver schools principals in November of 2005, suggesting that schools could submit waiver requests by April to exempt the older students in 11th and 12th grades. A second draft was presented to the Denver schools principals in February 2006, amending the original policy by stating that more time was needed to determine how the policy would be implemented. At a March meeting of the Denver schools principals, administrators presented the final plan, which requires all freshmen to remain on campus. Waivers may be requested for the other grades of 10th, 11th and 12th.

After the meeting, principals scrambled to make the new Denver schools policy work. Since the lunchtime schedule dictates the classroom schedules, the new Denver Plan is causing an upheaval in many Denver schools, where they have a common lunchtime for all students and teachers. Small cafeteria capacity means multiple lunchtime schedules must be implemented. For example, Denver schools East High School enrolls 2,092 students with a cafeteria that seats only 258. If only the 750 freshmen are kept on school grounds during lunchtime, at least three lunch periods will be required. This also upsets the activities by possible by a common lunch period, such as club meetings, students meeting with classroom teachers, and students socializing with their friends and siblings who are in different classes.

The Denver schools principals must submit waiver requests for their schools before April of each prior school year, which will be granted based upon the quality of the school's truancy reduction plan. Principals consulted with staff and solicited input from students and the community before deciding for which grades to request waivers. To support their waiver requests, they included student data, such as attendance. Additionally, it is unclear whether Denver schools with current good attendance rates will receive special treatment; however, the plan has a 97 percent attendance rate goal for all schools.

Though Denver schools principals received the new policy with mixed reviews, the students vehemently oppose it. Hundreds of students attended a student forum on the topic and completed an

online survey. It was the hottest topic at the end of the Denver schools 2005–2006 school year. Even the middle school children were hotly debating the subject, since the policy will affect them in the near future. Students are in total agreement that the Denver schools would be better served by targeting their anti–truancy efforts at the students with actual attendance problems. The students see the new policy as a punishment for all students.

Patricia Hawke is a staff writer for Schools K–12, providing free, in–depth reports on all U.S. public and private K–12 schools. Patricia has a nose for research and writes stimulating news and views on school issues. For more on Denver schools visit

<http://www.schoolsk–12.com/Colorado/Denver/index.html>



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