

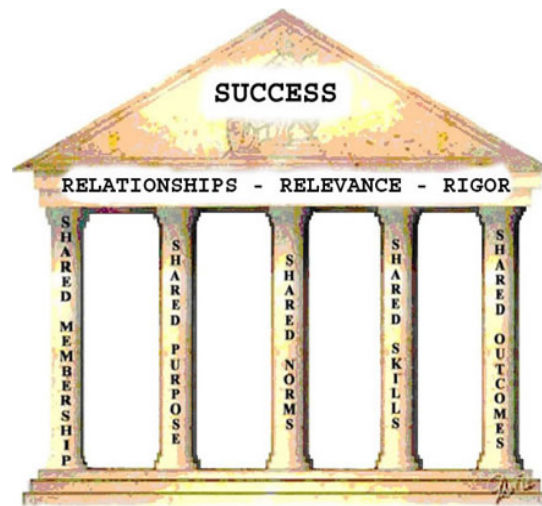
# I JUST CAN'T WAIT 'TIL TOMORROW...

## Learning Communities Newsletter



Edited by: Matt Duchow

Volume: 2    Number: 1



## THE RUBBER CHICKEN AWARD GOES TO:

**Andrea Slack**

Given for an outstanding LEARNING  
COMMUNITIES contribution

For getting right to it and moving her kids well into the trust phase of the sequence in less than a week of class time.

## ACTIVITY SEQUENCE

## ACTIVITY IDEAS

### HERE WE GO AGAIN!

So I was walking into the Blue Pod the other day and a 1<sup>st</sup> grade student was standing at the entrance to the boy's restroom looking down and mumbling "The lights are off." I pointed out that the switch was right by his head and all he needed to do is flip it on. He proceeded into the restroom and I headed into a classroom. I came out a few minutes later in time to see him walking out of the restroom looking at the floor and mumbling something about hand washing. I stopped him and asked what he was saying. He repeated, "I already washed my hands this morning." I said, "Billy (name changed to protect the innocent), did you wash your hands after going to the bathroom?" He responded, "I already washed my hands this morning." I said, "Billy, it's a good idea to always wash your hands after you use the restroom." He turned and went back into the restroom. I followed to watch him do what I call a "boy job" of washing his hands. First comes about a quart of soap onto the palm of his hand. It would have been more if I didn't tell him to stop. Then he rubs his palms together fingers out straight so that water and soap only touch his palms. A quick rinse of the hands is followed by cranking out the paper towels until they almost touch the floor. It would have been more if I didn't tell him to stop. In spite of the fact that nothing is wet other than his palms, Billy methodically dried his arms and hands starting at the elbows working down to his fingertips.

Two things come to mind when I think about Billy.

1. Just because you already did it once, doesn't mean you don't have to do it again.
2. Doing it the same way every time can be a waste and not a good use of time and resources. (Why dry a dry elbow? Because I've always done it that way!)

This reminds me of how important sequencing and framing are. *It is important to do things in the right order, but the sequence and frame must be constantly tweaked according to the group's needs.* Sometimes we have to go back a step and repeat what has already been done. Sometimes we have to change the rules of the activity or the questions we ask in order to make it work. The best part of this process from my point of view is that it often does not go the way you expected. Sometimes you get a pleasant surprise (Ask Andrea what happened with her kids yesterday).

Remember, the basic sequence is: Warm-ups and get-to-know-you activities, Deinhbitizer activities, Trust building activities, and Group problem-solving activities. More on how to make adjustments later.

JTTCC = "Journey Toward the Caring Classroom"

Today's Focus: Sequencing

Remember to use Matt as a resource. I have ropes, and other equipment as well as lots of books and all kinds of stuff in my head. I would love to help in your classroom too.

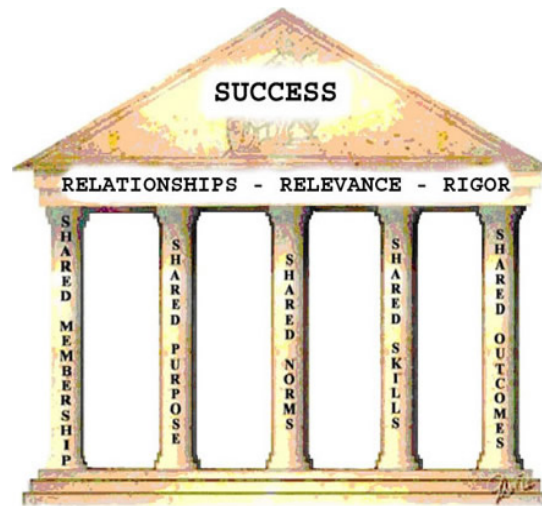
# I JUST CAN'T WAIT 'TIL TOMORROW...

## Learning Communities Newsletter



Edited by: Matt Duchow

Volume: 2      Number: 2



## THE RUBBER CHICKEN AWARD GOES TO:

**Ann Riggs and Pat  
Davis**

To Ann for suggesting that we have an actual traveling trophy for the Rubber Chicken Award and Pat for supplying the trophy.

Given for an outstanding LEARNING  
COMMUNITIES contribution

### Problems, Problems, Problems

I have been a professional problem solver for almost 30 years now. I think of problems as being job security for me. This fall I am feeling more secure in my job than I have felt in 30 years...

**Here's a problem:** I think it was the second week of school this fall. Marla came into my office talking about instructional pacing guides. Already in week two she was feeling behind. "We didn't get to this week's stuff. Do we move right into next week's stuff so we don't get behind? Find just most important stuff and do that?" It was really a rhetorical question. Marla knows what to do. She has been practicing great teaching for a long time. She just wanted to do it right, because that's what Marla does. This makes me think about *sequencing* again. I know that everyone reading this knows how to assess where their students are in an academic area and determine the best time to move on, the best pace, and when to back up, re-teach. I never cease to be impressed with the academic instruction I see here. You have that academic sequencing down.

**Here's a solution:** Sequencing your *Learning Communities* activities may be a different story. I would like to remind you of a method that is commonly used for determining how to adjust your building successful *Learning Communities* activity sequence (*Warm-ups and get-to-know-you, Deinhbitizer, Trust building, and Group problem-solving activities*). I have spoken about it with you before and have written it into a newsletter before, but the current brain research says that review is not just a very good thing, but necessary. The method is called GRABBS. Using GRABBS, we can read a group and tell where we should go next.

#### Goals

How does the activity relate to the group and individual goals that have been set?

#### Readiness

This regards levels of instruction (skills) and safety capabilities. Is the group ready to do the activity? Will they endanger themselves and others? Do they have the ability to attempt or complete?

#### Affect

What is the feeling of the group? What kinds of sensations are they having? What is the level of empathy or caring in the group?

#### Behavior

How is the group acting? Are they resistive? Disruptive? Agreeable? Are they more self involved, or group involved? Are there any interactions that are affecting the group, both positive and negative? How cooperative are they?

#### Body

What kind of physical shape are they in? How tired are they? Are they on medication? How do they see their own bodies?

#### Stage

Which developmental stage is the group at? Groups will go through levels of functioning. Having a schema to describe these levels will provide you with another means of assessment.

Source: Islands of Healing, 1988.

**And speaking of problems,** I was doing a Kelso's Choices lesson in Judy Flynn's Kindergarten class. We were talking about the difference between a big problem and a small problem. One little girl raised her and said, "I have a big problem. My underwear is too small for my butt."

I just can't wait 'til tomorrow... the Kindergartens will be back!

JTTC = "Journey Toward the Caring Classroom"

Today's Focus: Sequencing

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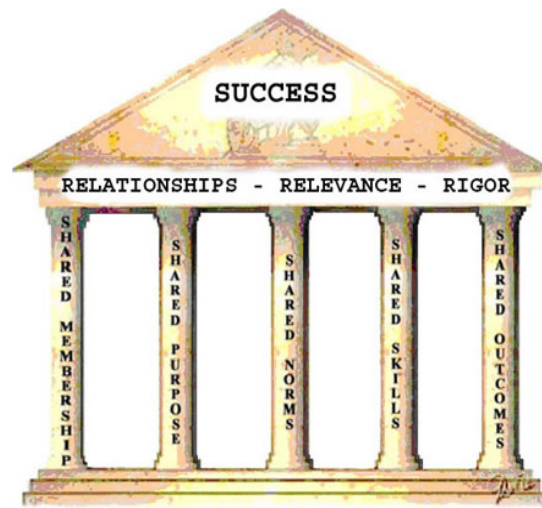
# I JUST CAN'T WAIT 'TIL TOMORROW...

## Learning Communities Newsletter



Edited by: Matt Duchow

Volume: 2      Number: 3



## THE RUBBER CHICKEN AWARD GOES TO:

**Megan Thompson**

For pushing me to offer the classes below again (I can often use a good push), and her help in writing this newsletter edition.

Given for an outstanding LEARNING  
COMMUNITIES contribution

Cheryl D'Labbe reports that this community stuff really works. She recently had her kids list all the things they want to keep about the day in their classroom and all the things they don't want to keep. The list of positive things they want to keep is so long and the other list is so short she is going to have to change the form!

E-mail from Andrea Slack: Thank you!!! We did the morphing activity yesterday and during the debrief I asked if everyone seemed to follow the rules. I was coming with my experience from last year, so I thought kids were going to say that other kids cheated. Matt, kids actually said they felt like everyone played fair. NO ONE felt like anyone didn't follow the rules or cheat. I almost didn't know how to react. One student even said that all students were honest and that they felt we had a trustworthy class. Can you believe it???

- Would you like students to be more willing to take academic risks in your classroom?
- Would you like to have an easier time managing your classroom?
- Do you like to have fun while learning (and earning up to 18 clock hours)?
- Have we gotta program for you.

If you want to learn different way to build a successful learning community in your classroom, or add to you bag of tricks, you may want to have a look at this. We will be offering a nine hour training which will be divided into three separate three hour sessions. You will have the opportunity to earn up to 18 clock hours.

### **Introduction to Building Successful Learning Communities** - first 3 hour session

You will learn and experience how to build a strong learning community within any classroom around the following topics: experiential education, academic risk-taking, challenge by choice, full value contract, group and role development in the classroom.

### **The Art of Facilitation in the Classroom** - second 3 hour session

This session builds upon the first. The participant will gain an understanding of the art of facilitation of a group including the use of the adventure wave, group assessment, activity adjustment, activity sequencing, framing (briefing), processing (debriefing), and safety considerations.

### **Integrating Successful Learning Communities into the Classroom Curriculum** - third 3 hour session

Participants will design a learning communities sequence that can be used in their classrooms. Participants will learn to integrate learning communities activities and concepts into current curriculum.

This series will be offered on three separate evenings. Please contact Matt ([mduchow@sequim.k12.wa.us](mailto:mduchow@sequim.k12.wa.us)) for more details if you are interested.

JTTCC = "Journey Toward the Caring Classroom"

Today's Focus: How do I find out how to do this stuff?

Remember to use Matt as a resource. I have ropes, and other equipment as well as lots of books and all kinds of stuff in my head. I would love to help in your classroom too.



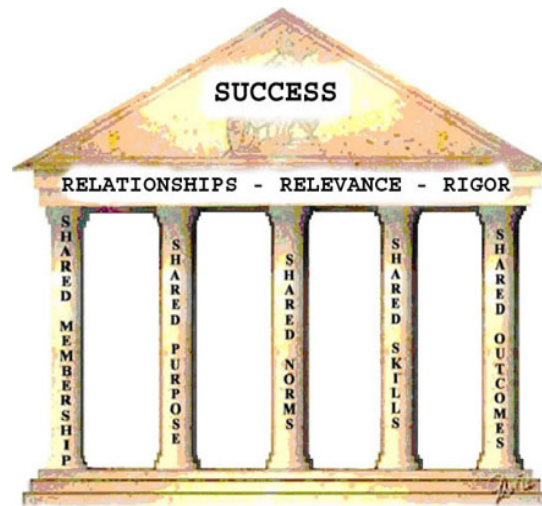
# I JUST CAN'T WAIT 'TIL TOMORROW...

## Learning Communities Newsletter



Edited by: Matt Duchow

Volume: 2      Number: 4



## THE RUBBER CHICKEN AWARD GOES TO:

Given for an outstanding LEARNING  
COMMUNITIES contribution

**Becky Stanton and  
Andrea Slack**

For volunteering to help  
teach the Building  
Successful Learning  
Communities classes this fall

## And you thought "tag" was just a game...

Rachel Oden was playing Elbow Tag with her fifth grade class. When Rachel debriefed the first round of the activity many of the kids were very angry. They said they felt excluded and unable to participate. As Rachel asked questions about the activity, the class talked about how important it is to include everyone and came up with ideas about how to go about including everyone. The next round of the game included everyone. As Rachel led the kids through a debrief they talked about how much more fun it was, and then... **THE CLASS STARTED TALKING ABOUT HOW MUCH MORE FUN AND HOW MUCH BETTER IT WOULD BE IF THEY MADE AN EFFORT TO INCLUDE EVERYONE IN ACADEMIC LEARNING ACTIVITIES IN THE CLASSROOM. THEY TALKED ABOUT WAYS THAT THEY COULD INCLUDE EACH OTHER IN ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES AND HOW MUCH BETTER THEIR LEARNING WOULD BE AS A RESULT!**

Andrea Slack was playing another tag game with her class called "Everybody's It" (this is my personal favorite- see Can't Wait newsletter Volume 1 #2). When they were debriefing the game **IT TURNED INTO A GREAT DISCUSSION ABOUT ACADEMIC GOAL SETTING!**

They were just two tag games. But they turned into much more. With the **right frame and debrief** kids came up with their own ideas about how to help each other learn and how to set academic goals!

If you can get to those points with tag games, just think about how far your students can go with a well framed and debriefed trust or problem-solving activity. If you would like to learn how, sign up for the Building Successful Learning Communities classes they will be on November 15 and 29 and December 6 (9 hours of class - 18 hours of clock hour credit).

*Contact Matt (ext 202 or [mduchow@sequim.k12.wa.us](mailto:mduchow@sequim.k12.wa.us)) for details.*

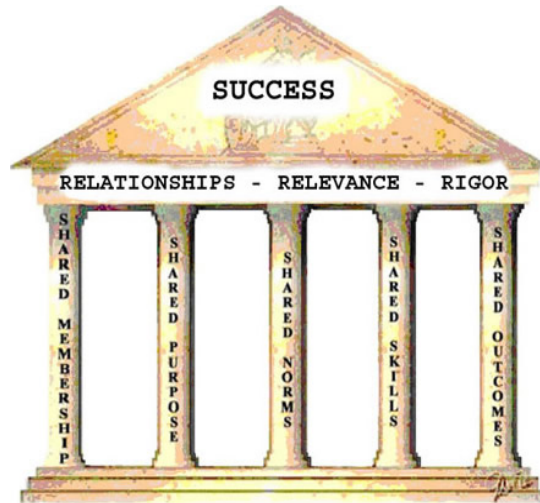
# I JUST CAN'T WAIT 'TIL TOMORROW...

## Learning Communities Newsletter



Edited by: Matt Duchow

Volume: 2      Number: 5



## THE RUBBER CHICKEN AWARD GOES TO:

**Robi Andison**

For inspiring the theme of  
this newsletter and cracking  
me up with the following  
observation:

"As much as you wish you  
could, you just can't unsee  
some stuff"

Given for an outstanding LEARNING  
COMMUNITIES contribution

## Is seeing really believing?

It depends on your perspective. An autistic child in our school became truly upset and panicked when he could not see his hands because his rain soaked sweatshirt sleeves had stretched out exclaiming, "I'm shrinking!" Veronica, one of the paraeducators in the living skills program was heard saying to that same student on a different occasion, "Listen with your eyes." Veronica knows that most autistic people process information much better visually than auditorally. Really, we all see and learn things in different ways.

Bill stopped by the other day and observed that he had not seen a learning communities newsletter come out in a long time. He was right, and the reason for that has to do with how busy I have been doing other things having to do with changes I see in our population here at Haller. I have been busier than ever dealing with problem behavior. My own observations as well as those shared by parents and staff make me think that a portion of our population is changing or is growing in number. We appear to have more and more students who do not recognize the basic social conventions such as saying please and thank you, greeting others as they pass by in the hall, or just generally knowing and demonstrating respectful behavior. The resulting behavior is disruptive to learning and is not just going to change on its own. We have two choices in the way we look at this problem:

- 1) Be angry and frustrated, complain and live with it and the resulting loss of instructional time.
- 2) Take control and do something about it ourselves.

If we choose #2, we will need to take responsibility for teaching respectful behavior in our classrooms. I know I'm probably preaching to the choir but... we will have to look at what we do from a different angle and realize that the time spent teaching appropriate behavior will be less than the time currently spent on managing inappropriate behavior, which will in turn increase instructional time. This is really what much of the Building Successful Learning Communities thing is about. I have come to see that I have not done an adequate job of helping others see that. I believe that some of us are seeing long wet sleeves that don't do us much good and missing the useful hands hidden by those sleeves. With the help of Cheryl, I have come up with a different way to look at this. I just can't wait 'til you see the next newsletter...

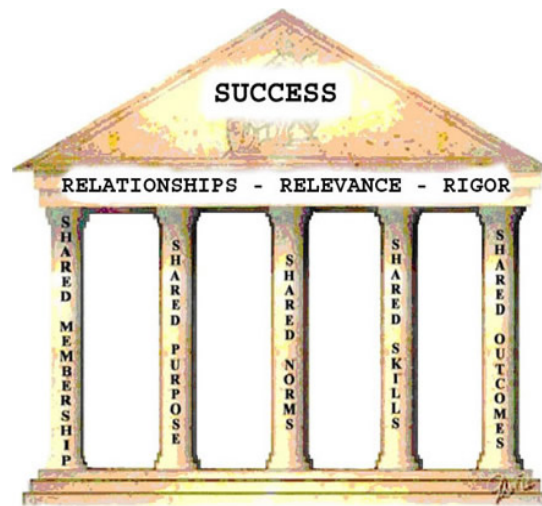
# I JUST CAN'T WAIT 'TIL TOMORROW...

## Learning Communities Newsletter



Edited by: Matt Duchow

Volume: 2      Number: 6



## THE RUBBER CHICKEN AWARD GOES TO:

**Robi Andison**

**I just think she should  
get to keep it for  
awhile.**

Given for an outstanding LEARNING  
COMMUNITIES contribution

## It's all in your perspective...

Judy Flynn was trying to get the attention of one of her kindergarteners by saying the girl's name several times. When the girl finally recognized that Judy was talking to her the girl said, "Sometimes I just don't notice myself." Now that's an interesting perspective. Sometimes we just don't pay attention to the right thing and we don't recognize and notice the things we ought to recognize and notice.

Here's another thing I have noticed. Reading instruction has been a big priority at Haller for a number of years. We all recognize that if one cannot read well, most of the other things we need to do as students don't go well either. We have also taken math instruction very seriously with almost all teachers involved in OMSP. Knowing the importance of reading and math, we take our instruction in those areas very seriously. We instruct purposefully and sequentially. We individualize instruction when there is a student need. We would never dream of trying to teach a student how to divide without having first taught them how to add and subtract. We provide instruction in the skill areas of need.

I know I am preaching to the choir again, but I just want to make sure we are all on the same page. As mentioned in the last newsletter, managing student behavior can take up a lot of that valuable instructional time necessary for teaching reading and math. Since a growing number of our students are not going to get behavioral instruction elsewhere, we need to teach it ourselves. If we are to teach students the skills to behave appropriately, then we have to take behavioral instruction as seriously as we do reading and math instruction. It needs to be taught purposefully and sequentially. As I talk with teachers in our building about learning communities I find that we have folks operating from three different perspectives. 1) There are those who feel that what they have been doing for years is working just fine so are not interested in doing something else. If it ain't broke, don't fix it. 2) There are those that have taken on the Building Successful Learning Communities concept understanding that it is a philosophy and method and not just a set of activities. They teach it and integrate it into their curriculum feeling that it makes a difference. 3) And there are those that have dabbled a bit using a few activities without implementing the whole model. It is not working in those classrooms because the model is not truly being followed and I believe that that is largely **my** fault. I have not been successful in getting the point across. My newsletters and my own behavior of the past have unintentionally put emphasis on the activities that we may use and not an adequate amount of attention on the model. The activities are not what works. The model/process is what works. It is not the actual activities we use to teach math that are important. It is the concept that we use the activities to teach that is truly important. We need to **trust** the process. Next newsletter lets talk about cooking...

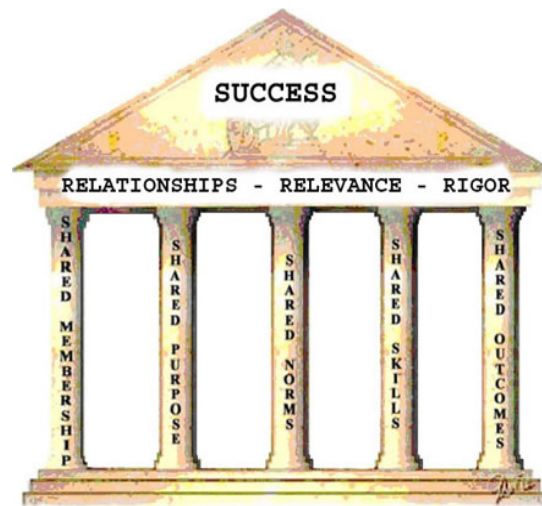
# I JUST CAN'T WAIT 'TIL TOMORROW...

## Learning Communities Newsletter



Edited by: Matt Duchow

Volume: 2      Number: 7



THE RUBBER CHICKEN AWARD  
GOES TO:

**Cheryl Duchow**

**For coming up with the  
analogy used in the  
newsletter,  
and for being the main reason I  
just can't wait 'til tomorrow...**

Given for an outstanding LEARNING  
COMMUNITIES contribution

## Lets talk cooking.

Specifically, making spaghetti sauce. I'm thinking that just about everyone reading this knows how to make spaghetti sauce. We all go about doing it a bit differently, but we hopefully end up with something that works for us. We start with red sauce of some sort. Out of a can or a jar or pounded out of raw tomatoes. If we stop there, dump it over some cooked noodles, and set it in front of our family, the result may be less than positive. That is unless your goal was to get fired from the position of cook. Let's say we don't want to get fired and we want to produce a good product. We start to add stuff. Maybe some onion, garlic and basil. We stir it and let it heat through. Then we taste it. If we like it, we serve it. If we are not quite satisfied with the flavor we try tweaking it by adding more of something or adding something else. There isn't necessarily an exact amount of each spice or ingredient to add each time we make the sauce because the base we start with may not always be the same. We continue tweaking until we get what we want. Sometimes we just let it cook for awhile allowing the flavors to blend more. The key is that we have a goal flavor or flavor range that we are working toward and we realize that there are different combinations of spices and methods of cooking that will get us there. At first we aren't consistent in achieving our goal taste, but through practice we know what kinds of things to try. We taste and we adjust. Eventually we learn to trust our ability to know when and how to add an ingredient.

By now, I hope you know where I'm heading. In the fall, 20 to 30 tomatoes are going to walk into your room. If you are going to get them going the way you want them to be going, you need to season and cook accordingly. The raw material will be different every year, but the basic cooking method can be the same. You add activities and process those activities and evaluate. If the taste isn't right you add more or different activities or change your method of processing. As in cooking the spaghetti sauce the key is not the spices or activities themselves, but what you do with them. So it is with any subject you teach including behavior.

**Building Successful Learning Communities is about the process not about the activities.** One of the really cool things about it is that once you get good at it you can integrate the concept into all of your other subjects.

Next newsletter we talk about that first ingredient that we will add to our little tomatoes.

**Check out this related link:** [http://www.edutopia.org/blog/good-classroom-management-secret-maurice-elias?utm\\_source=feedburner&utm\\_medium=feed&utm\\_campaign=Feed%3A+spiralnotebook+%28Spiral+NoteBook%29](http://www.edutopia.org/blog/good-classroom-management-secret-maurice-elias?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+spiralnotebook+%28Spiral+NoteBook%29)



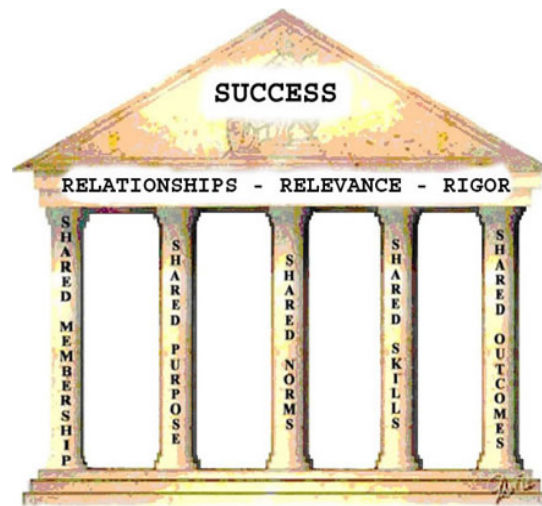
# I JUST CAN'T WAIT 'TIL TOMORROW...

## Learning Communities Newsletter



Edited by: Matt Duchow

Volume: 2      Number: 8



## THE RUBBER CHICKEN AWARD GOES TO:

Given for an outstanding LEARNING  
COMMUNITIES contribution

**Tracy Venegas**

For always being there to  
back up and support her  
general ed colleagues.

I'm seeing blue...

## The First Ingredient

The order of events really matters. I was having lunch with some second graders the other day.

Two of them were discussing a sequence of events:

Second Grader 1: The dinosaurs became extinct when God was born.

Second Grader 2: No, that happened 20 years before.

He went on to explain that God had to be born before the dinosaurs died because he created them. I don't get involved in these heady theological discussions with seven-year-olds partly because it's beyond me, and partly because of that whole separation of church and state thing. It sure can be fun to listen in though.

Back to our spaghetti sauce ... I'm going to name our sauce "trust." As I have hinted in previous newsletters trust is a pretty important thing in many respects. We often won't set out to do something if we don't trust that it will work. We don't take a risk if we don't trust that someone or our equipment will catch us if we fall. Students will not take learning risks unless they trust those around them to help them up if they fail, or at the very least, not kick them when they are down. Establishing a level of trust can take a long time. People have to go through a process or have experience with each other over a period of time. It can take a long time to establish and an instant to destroy. Trust is fragile and needs to be carefully nurtured. The Learning Communities process (not the activities) can be used to make that trust building process go a little (or a lot) faster, but because of the fragility of trust, you have to do it correctly. The first ingredient is the Full Value Contract (FVC). Once that contract is thoughtfully developed and agreed upon, the first step toward respectful behavior and trust is made. More on how to do that in coming newsletters.

As I have sat in on the grade level discussions regarding behavior one of the things that have come up over and over is the need to be consistent and be able to trust that our colleagues will follow through on upholding whatever standard we decide upon. Do we need a Full Value Contract?



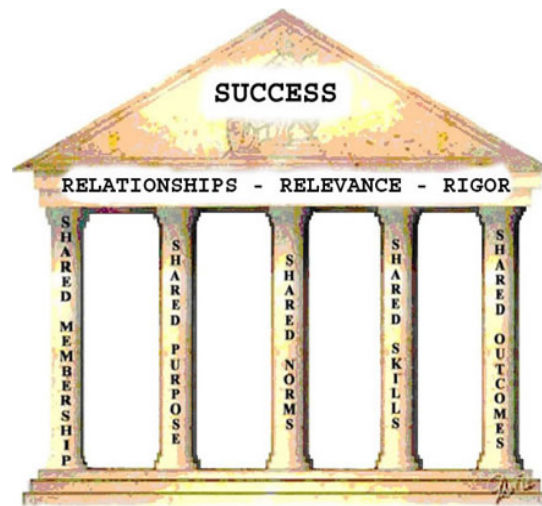
# I JUST CAN'T WAIT 'TIL TOMORROW...

## Learning Communities Newsletter



Edited by: Matt Duchow

Volume: 2      Number: 9



## THE RUBBER CHICKEN AWARD GOES TO:

Given for an outstanding LEARNING  
COMMUNITIES contribution

**Tracy Venegas**

She has not gotten to keep  
it long enough yet.

## ADVERTISEMENT

### FREE TRAINING OPPORTUNITY

The Peninsula College Challenge Course and the Gibbs lake Challenge Course are combining efforts to provide a free opportunity to experience a challenge course.

*No athletic ability required. No fitness level required. No ability or disability restrictions. If you think this is just for outdoorsy and physically active people you have been mislead and need to come find out about it yourself.*

This is a chance to check out a challenge course. Find out what it is like to participate. Prove to yourself that anyone (including you and your students) can benefit.

Date: 6/18/11

Time: 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM

Location: Peninsula College Challenge Course

At the end of the day, if you feel like you would like to learn more, info will be provided regarding an additional three day challenge course facilitator training. Challenge course facilitator skills are transferable to the classroom. These are the same concepts as Building Successful Learning Communities in the Classroom.

Contact Matt for more info.

[mduchow@sequim.k12.wa.us](mailto:mduchow@sequim.k12.wa.us) or extension 202

JTTCC = "Journey Toward the Caring Classroom"

Today's Focus: Where do we get training?

Remember to use Matt as a resource. I have ropes, and other equipment as well as lots of books and all kinds of stuff in my head. I would love to help in your classroom too.