

MoCo Monday Minute

Monday, November 21, 2016

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Quote of the Week – “Every student in my room is underperforming based on their potential, and it’s my job to do something about it – and I can do something about it.”

A teacher quoted in a study of successful Los Angeles educators



Thanksgiving Break – School will be closed November 23-25 for the Thanksgiving holiday break. When we return the following Monday, we will have just 17 days of school remaining before Christmas break.

Celebrating Success – (1) The MCHS Girls’ Basketball Team recently filled boxes for Operation Christmas Child as one of their service learning projects; (2) The ELC celebrated their 50th day in school with a 50s Day; (3) Four Montgomery County students were chosen to participate in the Student Traveling Art Exhibit “A Matter of Perspective.” Students’ artwork will be showcased in numerous schools, museums, businesses, libraries, and hospitals across the Commonwealth beginning January 2017. Congratulations to 7th grader





Jacob Martin, 8th graders Tanner Hatton and Sarah Yarber, and 11th grader Thomas Nye; (4) MCIS Leadership students, members of the 6th grade basketball team, and others helped Youth Service Center Director Christie Jouett assemble Thanksgiving food baskets on Friday. Twenty-five baskets were shared with families in need; (5) MCHS Bass Fishing Coach John Vice and senior team

members were featured Saturday morning on Mt. Sterling radio station WMST with Ivan Ralls; (6) Camargo Elementary 4th grade students finished the program Too Good For Drugs. TGFD is a 10 week program where students learn about goals, decision making, identifying and managing emotions, affective communication, peer pressure, drugs, alcohol, and healthy choices.



Student Attendance – MSE claimed the daily and weekly-high attendance titles with 96.38% on Wednesday and 94.70% for the week. Congratulations!

FICA and Medicare Retirement Contributions – Due to changes in requirements from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to the Commonwealth of Kentucky, there will be a change in the current calculation and reporting of Social Security and Medicare tax liabilities beginning January 1, 2017. See the attached memo for more information.

Dates:

- Nov. 21 – McNabb SBDM Meeting, 5:00 p.m.
- Nov. 21 – MCIS PTO Meeting, 5:30 p.m.
- Nov. 22 – Mapleton Literacy Fair
- **Nov. 23-25 – No School – Thanksgiving Break**
- Nov. 28 – Born Learning Parent Workshop, Dinner at 5:30 p.m., ELC
- Nov. 28 – McNabb Boys' Basketball VS LCA

- Dec. 1-9 – MCHS Senior Beta Club Toy Drive
- Dec. 6 – Reading/Writing Wonderland, 5:00 – 6:00 p.m., MSE
- Dec. 6 – Mapleton Family Literacy Event “Doughnut and a Good Book”, 5:15 – 7:00 p.m.
- Dec. 6 – MCIS Orchestra Concert, 6:00 p.m.
- Dec. 7 – Camargo SBDM Meeting, 3:00 p.m.
- Dec. 8 – MSE Donuts with Dad
- Dec. 8 – Christmas Theater Performance, 6:00 p.m. Camargo Elementary
- Dec. 8 – MCIS Band Concert, 6:00 p.m.
- Dec. 9 – HOSA Blood Drive, 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m., MCHS Room 408
- Dec. 9 – MCIS Musical Aladdin Jr., 8:00 p.m.
- Dec. 10 – ACT Test, 8:00 a.m., MCHS
- Dec. 10 – MCIS Musical Aladdin Jr., 2:00 p.m. & 8:00 p.m.
- Dec. 12 – Camargo PTO Meeting, 4:00 p.m.
- Dec. 12 – Mapleton Special Called SBDM Meeting, 4:00 p.m.
- Dec. 12 – Creative Writing Showcase, 5:30 p.m., MCHS Auditorium
- Dec. 12 – MSE Treblemakers Choir Concert, 6:30 p.m.
- Dec. 13 – McNabb Winter Band Concert, 6:30 p.m., McNabb Auditorium
- Dec. 13 – MCHS Orchestra Winter Concert, 7:00 p.m., MCHS Auditorium
- Dec. 15 – Camargo Holiday Celebration, 6:00 p.m.
- Dec. 15 – McNabb Choir Concert, 6:00 p.m., McNabb Auditorium
- Dec. 15 – Vocal Music Concert, 7:30 p.m., MCHS Auditorium
- Dec. 15 – MCHS SBDM Meeting, 5:30 p.m.
- Dec. 19 – MCIS SBDM Meeting, 5:00 p.m.
- Dec. 19 – McNabb SBDM Meeting, 5:00 p.m.
- Dec. 20 – Board of Education Meeting, 6:30 p.m., MCHS Cafeteria (review session at 5:00 p.m.)
- **Dec. 21-30 – No School – Christmas Break**

Continuous Learning through Professional Literature

How to Deal with Student Backtalk

In this *Tools for Teaching* article, classroom management guru Fred Jones addresses a perennial teacher dilemma: how to respond when students who are being held accountable talk back. Jones contends that it’s a cardinal error for teachers to try to push back on student backtalk, especially getting upset. That’s a major cause of teacher fight-flight stress. “It takes one fool to backtalk,” says Jones. “It takes two fools to make a conversation of it.”

The key is to remain calm and not react. “Fortunately for us,” says Jones, “backtalk is one of the *least* creative endeavors of the disruptive student. Mouthy students have been saying the same things since little Babylonian kids went to school.” Here are some ways students try to get off the hook when they’re goofing off and the teacher has told them to get back to work:

- *Whiny backtalk* – Self-justification used when students are trying to get the teacher off their back, for example:

- Denial (“I wasn’t doing anything.” “We weren’t talking.” “I’m not chewing gum.”)
- Blaming your neighbor (“She was talking, not me.” “They started it.” “He was just asking me a question.”)
- Blaming the teacher (“I had to ask him because you went over it so fast.” “I had to ask her because I can’t read your handwriting.” “I had to ask him because you didn’t make it clear.”)
- Suggesting that you take a hike (“All right, I’ll do it.” “All right, I’ll do it if you just leave me alone.” “All right, I’ll do it for you just to get you out of my face! I can’t work with you standing over me like that!”)
- Goodie-two-shoes compliment to divert the teacher’s attention and get some brownie points (“Oh, Mrs. Johnson, what a beautiful pin.”)

In all of these situations, Jones says it’s a fatal classroom management error to take the bait. For example, with the Blaming the Teacher gambit, if a teacher responds, “I went over this material step by step not ten minutes ago. It is written right up there on the board if you would care to read it. Now, I’m sick and tired...”, the hook is set and the student just has to reel in the increasingly irate teacher. Or with the compliment, if the teacher says, “Why thank you, dear. I got that for my birthday. Now, you get some work done” and wanders off, the student will almost certainly be goofing off a minute later.

So what’s the alternative? “Take two relaxing breaths,” Jones advises, “kill some time, and keep your mouth shut. This too shall pass.” Sometimes it’s helpful to see the humor in the situation. For example, with the Blaming Your Neighbor ploy, imagine a paraphrase of what the student is really saying: “Gee, teacher, we weren’t goofing off when we were talking. We were operating a peer tutoring program to further our education.”

- *Nonverbal backtalk* – These are tactics students use that function as backtalk without the risk of mouthing off:

- Crying – “If crying gets kids off the hook at home,” says Jones, “they may try it at school. Some parents start apologizing as soon as the tears flow.” The best strategy is to remain impassive and wait for the tears to stop, then say, “We can talk about your crying later. For right now, the least I will expect from you is that you get your work done.”

- Pushing you aside – The student pushes the teacher’s arm away as he or she leans on the desk. The teacher could make a big deal of it (assault!), but a better approach is to relax the arm that’s been pushed, remain calm, and hang in there without backing off. “The student, confronted by an immovable object, must now finally deal with your presence,” says Jones. “At this point, he or she usually realizes that getting back to work is the cheapest way out.”
- A kiss on the nose – Once a popular “Joe Cool” high-school student was having an extended conversation with his buddy and the female teacher leaned over and told him to get back to work. He looked up at the teacher, leaned forward, and gave her a kiss on the nose. She did nothing and continued to look at him. “All eyes were on him,” says Jones. “It came as a surprise when nothing happened. It became embarrassing when nothing *at all* happened. Some classmates giggled. Joe blushed. The teacher just looked at him and waited, but her lack of emotion came across as nonchalance, as though to say, ‘This happens to me all the time.’ Joe wilted. He looked for a place to hide but had to settle for getting back to work.”

The moral of all this? “When in doubt,” says Jones, “do nothing. This may not seem like much of a strategy, but, in the heat of the moment, it can be a life-saver. Would you rather respond impulsively or have some time to think?”

“Responding to Backtalk: When in Doubt, Do Nothing” by Fred Jones at *Tools for Teaching*, November 9, 2016, <http://bit.ly/2eTkshj>

Be sure to notify the designated person at your school if you have calendar information that should be added to your website calendar.

Thank you so much for your effort and commitment to children. If you have questions about any of the information contained in this issue of The MoCo Monday Minute, please contact me at matthew.thompson@montgomery.kyschools.us.