

Poolville Elementary School *The Monarch Metropolitan*

January 20, 2020, Edition II

A Letter From the Editor: Using Your Two Ears Before Your One MOUTH!

Today's edition of **The Metro** offers a unique glimpse into the complexities associated with "**student voice**". Specifically, as parents, my wonderful wife Lori and I are not embarrassed by much these days. We have been painfully conditioned over the years by a child that might scream his head off while we strolled through the aisles of the supermarket. Babies have had diaper blowouts of extreme proportions soon after we entered the mall, movie theater, and/or restaurant. Heck, we spent most of our formative parenting years walking around places with unknown stains on our clothes...and yet we were not phased. However, even the greatest parents with the thickest skins have breaking points when it comes to verbal public humiliation. The following were mine.



Strike One: As a young parent, I was obsessed with over-preparing **Griffin**, now 13, for school. We read regularly, worked through flashcards feverishly, and always downloaded and practiced with word of the day apps. to strengthen his ever-growing vocabulary. One day we were in line at the local hardware store. The store was swamped. There were easily thirty customers crammed together in line better suited to fit a group of five. When we reached the midpoint of the line, Griffin tugged at my sleeve and stated, "**Dad! The man behind me just defecated!**"

Within seconds, everyone in line scattered. In ten short seconds the only three that remained in line where...Griffin....Mr. Stinky....and me. I looked at Griffin in horror. He smiled and said, "**It was my word of the day Dad!**" I shook my head, walked to the checker and proceeded to pay for the man's items and my own merchandise.



Strike Two: Michael, my now 20-year-old Marine, came into my life when he was about to turn sixteen. Upon receiving this blessing, I made it my life's mission to teach Michael how to effectively and efficiently use his voice. When we began he was soft-spoken, well-mannered, and funny. Loving him as much as I do, I taught him to speak with confidence...to command attention with tone and volume...to let the world know that when he says something it has value. Michael was a quick study.

One day we were in line at the paint counter. The man behind the counter was well-intentioned, overworked, and a little short tempered. As we patiently awaited our turn, the man at the counter was chastising an



elderly woman for bringing in a paint sample that was too small to effectively color match. He rudely told her that she needed a sample size equal to a quarter if she wanted his help. Michael heard this, turned to me, and said (*in a well projected and confident voice*), ***"A sample the size of his privates."*** As I dragged him out of the store by his ears he stopped to hug the elderly lady.



Strike Three: ***Dawson***, my now 9-year-old, is an observer. He watches everything and everyone. Lori and I affectionately refer to him as our silent assassin. One day we were waiting in line for the movie. There were thirty to forty other movie-goers huddled around us. As Dawson surveyed the crowd he pointed at one of the patrons and said, ***"Look Dad, Duck Dynasty!"*** His brother Griffin spotted an elderly man with a beard before I did and made matters worse by saying, ***"No it isn't! It's Santa's skinnier brother Jack!"***

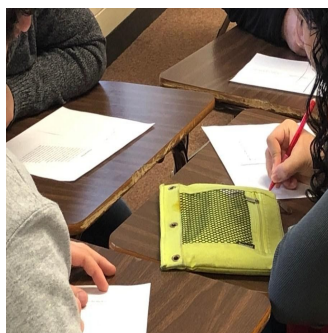
Everyone around us laughed. I grabbed the boys and led them to the nearest exit. I am sure they all heard me telling the boys, ***"You can now call me Satan!"***

So, how do these ***parent-of-the-year*** highlights tie to ***instructional excellence at the 'Pool'***? I am glad you asked! Silence in the classroom...and with your own children...can be golden. We all know the benefits of discussion in the classroom whether it be teacher-led, Socratic, or any of the other effective strategies for getting kids talking. However, silent discussions can also be a powerful tool for active reading and learning. Silent discussions work well because:

- All students participate. Classroom discussions can be monopolized by a few voices, and some students may not feel comfortable participating at all. Silent discussions ensure that everyone participates in the discussion.
- It's a great strategy for introverts, who tend to need some time to think before they respond and may prefer to do so in writing.
- It allows for a record of the conversation that can be used for additional activities, as well as a handy record for teachers to assess the level of understanding of the entire class.

Here are two of my favorite strategies that I have found to help you effectively transform silent classrooms into high-performing, highly engaged classrooms.

Strategy 1: Seated Silent Discussions



To begin:

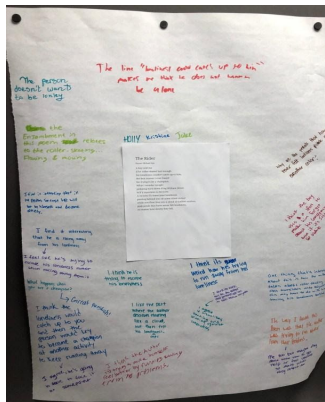
- Divide your class into groups of four. You will want to set your room up in groups that make it easy to pass papers around.
- Find four different pieces of text for students to respond to and print them out with enough room around them to write.
- Each person starts with one of the reading selections. At this point,



tell the class to be silent for the remainder of the activity. All of the discussion happens on the paper. They then have four minutes to read the selection and start a discussion about it. At this point, it's important to tell students they are NOT annotating, but instead starting a discussion about it. They need to give the rest of the group something to respond to. Please also tell them that they can't write one comment and sit there for the rest of the four minutes. They should be interacting with the text the entire time.

- Sometimes it's helpful to give them a few prompts, such as: What do you find interesting? What do you find strange? What do you like about what the author is doing with literary devices? What does this remind you of?
- Once the four minutes are up, they pass their paper to the next person. The process repeats, except this time they are responding to what others have written during the four minutes they have been given.
- Repeat the process as many times as you want (or as class time allows) but I usually stop after every student has responded to each reading selection. Then we take a moment for everyone to read all the discussions for the other reading selections.

Strategy 2: Poster Paper Silent Discussions



To begin:

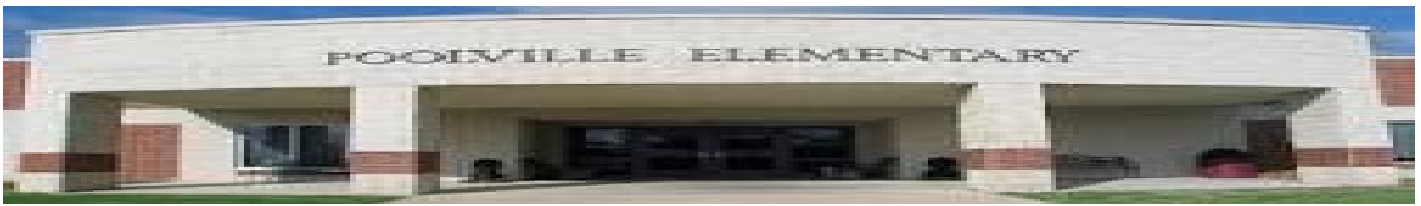
- For this silent discussion you'll need to break your students up into groups of three and you'll need one text for each group. For example, if I have 15 students...I have 5 groups.
 - Before class print off each text and mount it on a large sheet of paper, such as a piece of newsprint, butcher paper, or poster paper.
 - Tape or glue the texts to the big sheets of paper and place them around the room.
 - Assign each group a text to start. Give them each a marker.
 - Same rules as before. No talking, even within their group of three.
- Give them three minutes to respond to each selection.

- The key difference in this method is that they can respond to the reading selection AND to other people working in their group of three during their three minutes.
- Same as above, they may need some prompts to get the discussion going.
- At the end of the three minutes they rotate to the next station and the process continues.

CONCLUSION:

Both methods are highly effective. The chief drawback of the second method is you need to have more texts for students to work with, but I do like that they can comment within their groups so there's a little silent dialogue that goes on there as well. Also, it gets the students moving around, which always seems to help an afternoon class stay focused. Try both methods and see which one works for you.

Remember, silence can indeed be **GOLDEN!**



Early, deliberate, and purposeful interventions that are shared and supported campuswide go a long way in raising academic performance levels. Let's make it a point to try one or both of the aforementioned this week.

I cannot wait to be in your classrooms to document, promote, and brag about all of the success you and our *amazing Monarchs* experience because of your efforts.

#DestinationAccountabilityScore'A'

#DestinationSuccess

#DestinationTeamwork

#It'sAGreatDayToBeAtThePool