

Lured by **FISH!**



Stephani Thomas

Remember the overwhelming passion and the boundless energy that you had as a newbie teacher? Imagine a learning environment where *everyone* brings that kind of passion, positive energy, and attitude, and pair all of that with a tangible sense of personal connectedness to school, community, and home by parents, staff, and students.

Last year my school found just that when we were lured by *FISH!* Every year my principal gives us a little light summer reading. When she gave us all the book *FISH!* by Stephen Lundin, Harry Paul, and John Christensen, it provided me with a wonderful springboard from which to “jump into the deep end” and do what I am constantly asking my students to do: Take risks, don’t be afraid of change, and expand your vision of the world.

FISH! Philosophy

FISH! is about a “so simple, I can’t believe I didn’t think of it first” philosophy of four basic guiding principles that make the learning and teaching environment fun.

As an elementary visual arts teacher, I love what I do with a pas-

sion! However, I wasn’t completely convinced when the *FISH!* philosophy first swam along.

But *FISH!* wasn’t just one more thing I had to find space for in my overstuffed classroom suitcase, it became my suitcase. *FISH!* became the structural framework for shaping my classroom management and teaching. It was so simple and natural.

The *FISH!* philosophy basically states that if we choose

our attitude every day; if we can be there, present in the moment with and for others; if we can find time to play each and every day, we can ultimately make someone’s day and that someone could be one of our students, colleagues, parents, family, and even ourselves.

Practical Application

Since embracing the *FISH!* philosophy, the language in my classroom has changed slightly. For example, when introducing a new concept I may say something like “I need you to be there for me right now” or “make my day by focusing your attention up here,” and the ever-popular “Don’t be a stinky fish!” if someone is not adhering to the positive nature of the *FISH!* philosophy.

I want to make it clear that the tenets of the philosophy are not merely teacher driven. I found that once the principles were introduced and modeled, they were adopted and utilized by all. Student-to-student interactions, student to parent, student to staff, staff to staff—by the end of the first marking period, we had created a school community; a “school of fish” that possessed a common language and a positive way of making real connections and engaging each other.

While reading *FISH!*, I was so moved by the following quote that I feel the need to share it with all teachers: “There is something I know about you that you may not even know yourself. You have within you more resources of energy than have ever been tapped, more talent than has ever been exploited, more strength than has ever been tested, and more to give than you have ever given.” Never stop being inspired or inspiring others! 🐟

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WEB LINK

www.fishphilosophy.com

www.jaymctighe.com/books.html