

WE MUST ENGAGE STUDENTS IN ORDER TO TEACH THEM

It doesn't matter what we teach if students aren't paying attention. It doesn't matter if we address every single subject on our state assessment test. It doesn't matter if we "cover" every single thing our curriculum mandates. As the old saying goes, "Just because you teach it doesn't mean they learn it."

The only way students learn is if they are engaged, involved and interested. We *must* get their attention. The way to do that, in my experience, is to appeal to one of four sides to human nature:

- Love of creativity
- Responsiveness to real emotions
- Love of humor
- Intellectual curiosity

LOVE OF CREATIVITY

Everyone has a creative side, even if it's never been tapped. Quite often, students we can't reach in any other way will respond when they are encouraged to be creative. Being creative means being able to play with ideas, to come at subjects from different angles, to approach

WE MUST ACCEPT THE FACT THAT WE LIVE IN AN ELECTRONIC WORLD

As teachers, we often get into “ain’t it awful” contests about how little our students know. However, it is more realistic, and more productive, to simply deal with the reality of our students’ skills – or lack thereof. The fact is that we live in an electronic world. With television, radio, CDs, computers, computer games, DVDs, etc., students today simply don’t have as much experience reading, writing and even talking as students from previous generations.

In working with young writers, we need to remember that they are far more experienced at watching and listening than at writing. They are often uneasy about writing – just as, perhaps, we may be uneasy creating a .pdf file or authoring a web site in HTML or resetting the VCR timer – at least if we are over 30 or so. Students know a lot. It’s just not always what we want them to know.

Perhaps reading and writing simply don’t have quite the importance they once did in the world. I hate that idea. I also see that it might be true. Certainly there are young adults everywhere who seem smart as whips, who make connections quickly, who understand complicated