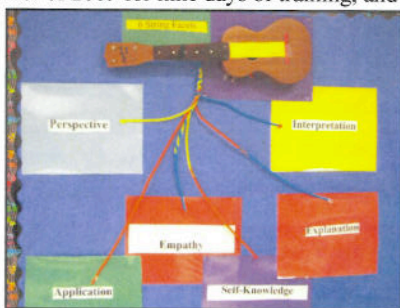


Project Tomorrow: Student Success in the 21st Century

Abbott Hunsucker
Director Title I
Lenoir County Schools
Northeast Elementary School

A unique opportunity to combine two schools (C.H. Bynum Elementary and Teachers Memorial Elementary) came about this school year in Lenoir County. Both schools served populations with over 95 percent free and reduced lunch status and a 99 percent African-American student body. It is fair to say that both schools were under-achieving. Bynum Elementary had been declared low performing and was about to enter year four of NCLB sanctions; Teachers Memorial Elementary was "holding" in its first year of NCLB sanctions. Everyone knew going forward that something innovative had to be done in order for the new school to be successful. Through collaboration with Margaret Gayle, Executive Director of the American Association for Gifted Children at Duke University and a Lenoir County central office team, a proposed vision of doing something different at the new school was introduced. This new vision was called "Project Tomorrow: Student Success in the 21st Century."

The vision for Project Tomorrow was built from a framework for success already introduced in two of our elementary schools. Lenoir County Public Schools had been involved since 2004 in a research project called Project Bright IDEA II, co-designed by Valerie Hargett and Margaret Gayle and under the direction of Margaret Gayle. The Bright IDEA project, a K-2 nurturing model, promotes a new way of thinking and teaching. The model facilitated unity between teachers, students, and families by providing strategies for a clear, focused, total school curriculum. The preliminary results of Project Bright IDEA II have overwhelmingly supported one of the project's primary goals of closing the achievement gap. This same model was used for Project Tomorrow, but was extended to include all students in grades K-five. Intensive professional development was required for this new initiative to be successful. Teachers from Northeast Elementary came together during the summer of 2009 for nine days of training, and



Understanding through the six facets of learning



The bulletin boards in this Project Tomorrow classroom show, from left to right: "Habits of Mind/Gifted Intelligent Behaviors," "Focus Board," and "Thinking Skills."

follow-up training is scheduled to be held throughout this school year and next summer.

Project Tomorrow implements an integrated approach to teaching by relating concepts such as relationships, change, or systems through exploring essential questions. Teachers are trained to design interdisciplinary concept-based curriculum units. Teaching through concepts helps to ensure that students know and can explain the "why" behind what they do. Project Tomorrow builds upon the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* by adding rigor to the content and by utilizing the research-based Building Thinking Skills program (Parks and Black). Another unique quality about Project Tomorrow is that *Gifted and Intelligent Behaviors*, adapted from Costa and Kallick's *Habits of Mind* and Mary Frasier's *Talents, Attributes and Behaviors*, are infused throughout the curriculum. Students are engaged in centers that provide task rotations through four major learning styles and multiple intelligences. Teachers use Bloom's Revised Taxonomy to employ higher order

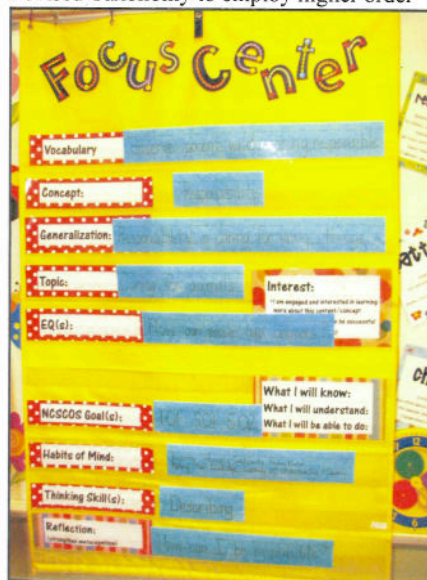
questioning techniques. The environment of the Project Tomorrow classroom is designed to enhance the quality of meta-cognitive and cognitive skills.

The most important aspect to the success of Project Tomorrow is the school culture. At Northeast, everyone believes that all students can achieve at the highest level. A "no excuses" philosophy is the motto. The essential questions that we ask ourselves are, "How do we educate the child born in 2000 to live, work and compete in the 'flat world' as described by Thomas Friedman? How will this generation of children grow up with the necessary knowledge and wisdom as defined by the new 21st century taxonomies to address issues, problems, and challenges when solutions are complex and not easily definable and accessible? More importantly, how will children have meta-cognitive prowess to explore deeper questions to ponder and seek solutions to problems not yet known?"

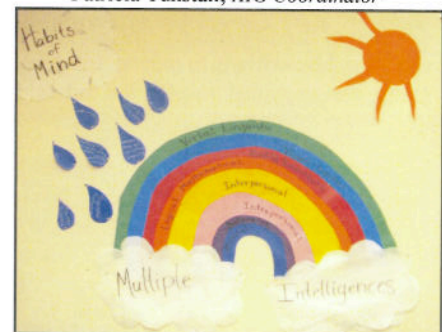
Project Tomorrow is our way of leading this generation toward these goals.

Credits:

Diane Lynch,
Associate Superintendent (retired)
 Mildred C. Dunn, Principal,
Northeast Elementary School
 Ellen Benton,
Executive Director of Instruction
 Tezella Cline,
Professional Development Specialist
 Patricia Tunstall, *AIG Coordinator*



A focus board exhibits the essential elements in a unit of study



Habits of Mind/Gifted and Intelligent Behaviors