

The Art of Teaching Kids (And Crusty Old Codgers)

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Notes to the Presenter:

The following presentation is best made by the use of flipchart paper on the walls in full view of the audience. Prior to the presentation, write and draw the symbols and abbreviations on the newsprint representing each of the major points of the presentation. Pages 10 – 13 show the lay out of the flip chart paper before the presentation. This pre-presentation layout takes approximately 30 minutes to prepare prior to the arrival of the audience. Pages 14 – 17 show the layout of the flipchart paper after the presentation with the resulting writing on the paper by the presenter.

There are some definite advantages to presenting this material in this manner.

1. The concepts to be discussed are represented by symbols which grab the attention of the audience and have them anxious to learn what the symbol means as they are approached in the presentation.
2. After each concept is discussed and notes regarding the concept are written on the newsprint, that newsprint remains on the wall for the remainder of the educational event. In this way, participants are continually exposed to the key points of the presentation long after the presenter has sat down.
3. This is an alternative to many of the “high tech” electronic presentations that can tend to separate the presenter from the audience. This approach actually draws the audience to the presenter.
4. This approach works well for audiences up to approximately 100 participants.

One disadvantage to this approach of presenting information is for large audiences with more than 100 participants. For these larger audiences, copies of *INFORMATION CONTAINED ON *the pre-presentation flipchart paper can be handed out to the audience before the presentation *ON 8 ½ BY 11 PAPER*. Audience members can write the appropriate notes as demonstrated by the presenter on large paper attached to the wall or even an overhead projector if needed.

Caution!

Some people may have a problem with the use of the word “kids” in the title and in the body of this presentation. While substitute words such as youth and young people are injected where appropriate, the author would submit that there are times when the word “kids” is the most appropriate choice of words.

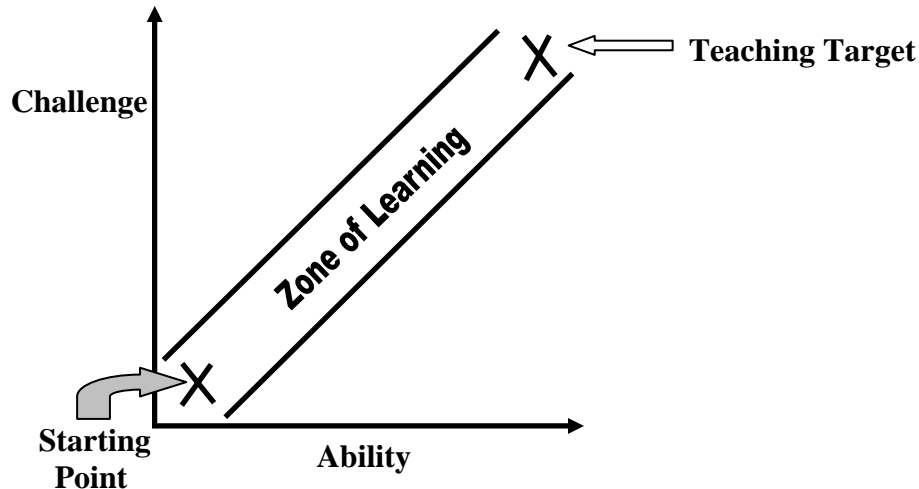
The attempt of the presentation is not to speak down to young people. The point needs to be made by the presenter that most of the concepts offered in “The Art of Teaching Kids” are also applicable to teaching “Crusty Old Codgers” as implied in the subtitle.

The Art of Teaching Kids (And Crusty Old Codgers)

ABC

Ability in Balance with Challenge

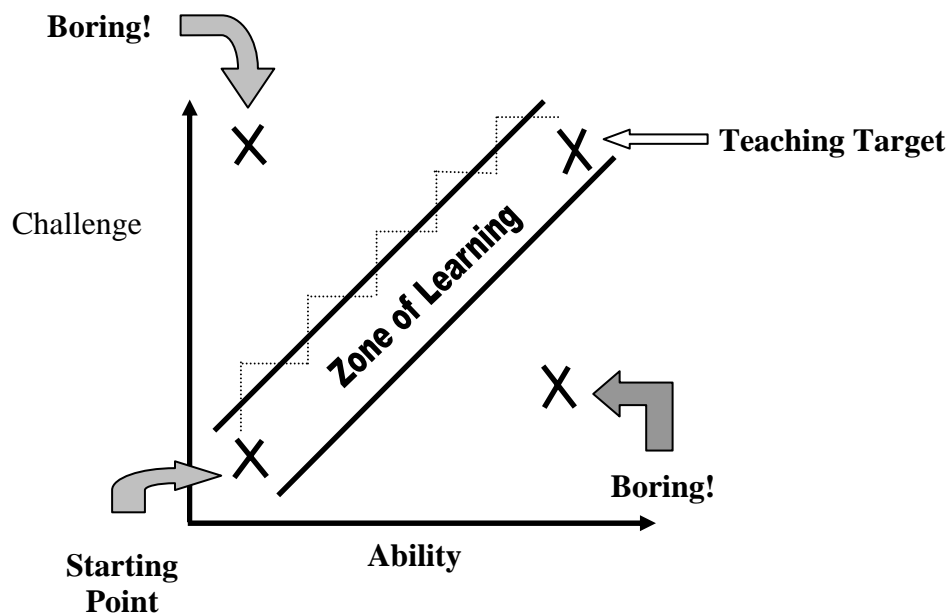
The term ABC can refer to the “basics” of whatever the topic is at hand. The ABC’s of teaching young people, or very basic concept that must be understood in order to be an effective teacher, is the concept of maintaining “*Ability in Balance with Challenge.*”



The preceding graph is adapted from the Zone of Proximal Development work of Lev Vygotsky. It illustrates the ability of the young student represented on the y-axis. The challenge that is posed to the young person as they are exposed to a learning experience is represented on the x-axis. The two parallel lines represent the zone of acceptance where learning can occur. The objective of an educational activity is to take a student from the starting point on the graph to the teaching target, each represented by the x’s.

If the educational activity lies on the lower right portion of the quadrant shown in the graph, not very challenging and well within their ability, how would kids describe the activity? Kids would describe the activity as “**Boring!**” If the educational activity or message lies on the higher left portion of the quadrant, very challenging and well outside their ability, how would young people describe that activity? Adults would use words like frustrating or aggravating to describe such a situation. Young people would call that “**Boring!**” Boring in kid language can mean that an activity is either too easy (not challenging) or too hard (too challenging).

The artful teacher of young (and older) people knows that the learner must be challenged with new and more difficult experiences, but after each challenging episode the learner must be brought back into the comfort where education occurs between the two parallel lines. In order to make any educational progress (moving people from the starting point to the teaching target) an individual must be “ratcheted” or “scaffolded” up between the challenge of the graph and the comfort zone of learning. (Draw a dotted line stair step as shown below as the next line is spoken). Challenge them, and back off into the comfort zone, challenge them again and back off, challenge, and back off. The teacher who can maintain this balancing act between challenge and ability of his/her students is a teacher who can engage students to learn.



Another analogy to illustrate the concept of keeping “**Ability in Balance with Challenge**” can be illustrated with a swimming pool and the act of teaching a young person to swim. Imagine the concept of maintaining “**Ability in Balance with Challenge**” as a swimming pool. The skill to be taught to the young person in this example is swimming. If we never let the swimming student out of the shallow end of the baby pool, that student becomes bored and loses interest in learning the skill to be taught.

But what if the activities or events that kids are involved in are extremely challenging and well outside their range of ability? What if we tried to teach a young people to swim by throwing them in the deep end -- with weights tied to them? When we throw kids into an extremely challenging activity well outside their ability it can be very frustrating, aggravating, and scary.

Perhaps a new swimmer needs to learn some basics in the shallow end but be allowed to test the waters on occasion in the deep end. As the learning swimmer is allowed to venture more and more into the challenging “deep end”, their skill as a swimmer increases.

If we provide the opportunity to challenge young people without boring them in the shallow end of the pool or drowning them in the deep end, learning can occur and skill levels are increased.

Adapted from Lev Vygotsky, 1978, Mind in Society, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press

TSI

***T*ell me, I forget;**

***S*how me, I remember;**

***I*nvolve me, I understand.**

What do the letters TSI stand for when speaking of teaching; T – tell me, I forgot, S – show me, I remember, I – involve me, I understand.

Try to remember the many boring lectures and speeches you have sat through in the past. Research clearly demonstrates that teaching is more effective if the learner is more involved in the learning activity. The more senses involved in a learning experience makes for a more profound and unforgettable learning experience.

Note: At this point in the presentation, involving an audience member in a live demonstration can help drive the point home about the importance of TSI. The demonstration used by the author is a basic trick roping demonstration that can be accomplished by just about anyone. That demonstration is described below. Feel free to substitute any appropriate demonstration to make the point.

To illustrate the concept of TSI, I need a “victim” or I man “volunteer” from the audience. With the help of (*audience member’s name*) I will demonstrate the concept of TSI. The most basic roping trick is called the flat loop. *Note: a cotton or nylon rope about 5-6 ft. long with a honda tied in it will work for this demonstration.*

A loop about two feet wide is made with the rope and about a foot or so of the rope extends from the honda to the end where you hold the rope during the spin. The rope is spun in a counter clockwise motion while the loop is flat (horizontal). The trick to properly performing the flat loop (loop is spinning) is to allow the part of the rope in your hand to spin freely in your hand. If the rope is not allowed to spin in the hand, the loop becomes knotted up in just a couple of spins of the rope.

Note: Now hand the rope to the audience victim. They should be able to perform the trick. If they have difficulty, start the trick for them and hand it off while the rope is spinning.

(*As the audience member is spinning the rope*) I could have told (name) about the importance of letting the rope spin in his/her hands, I could have shown (name) how to let the rope spin in his/her hands, but until (name) actually felt that rope spinning in his/her hand, (name) really did not understand the concept being explained. Not until you are actually involved do you truly understand.



Focus on the Kids

Focus on your audience, in this case –kids. It is very easy for adults, with their broader frame of reference in worldly matters, to think and speak in ways that young people have no chance to comprehend. An example of this concept is the following list compiled in 1998 at Beloit College in Wisconsin.

This list is compiled each year to try to give the faculty a sense of the mindset of each year's incoming freshmen. Here are a few of the things that "wise and experienced" (*politically correct term for old know-it-all*) educators need to be mindful of regarding their target audience.

- They never took a swim and thought about "Jaws."
- They have no idea that Americans were ever held hostage in Iran.
- Bottle caps have always been screw off and plastic
- The expression "you sound like a broken record" means nothing to them.
- They have always had an answering machine.
- They are too young to remember the space shuttle blowing up.
- Jay Leno has always been on the Tonight Show
- Popcorn has always been cooked in the microwave.
- They don't know who Mork was or where he was from.
- They never heard: "Where's the Beef?", "I'd walk a mile for a Camel", or "de plane Boss, de plane".
- They do not care who shot J.R. and have no idea who J.R. even is.
- They cannot imagine not having a remote control for the television.
- Their lifetime has always included AIDS.
- There have always been VCR's, but they have no idea what a BETA machine is.
- There has always been MTV.

This list was compiled with 18 year olds in mind. How about the frame of reference of a 9 year old? Perhaps educators of young people need to keep the following list in mind when working with kids.

Things I've Learned

- I've learned that if you spread the peas out on your plate it looks like you ate more—age 6
- I've learned that you should never jump out of a second story window using a sheet for a parachute—age 10
- I've learned that you shouldn't confuse a black crayon with a Tootsie Roll—age 10
- I've learned that when you have three of your wild friends in the car, the driver freaks—age 9
- I've learned that you can't hide a piece of broccoli in a glass of milk—age 7
- I've learned that when I wave at people in the country they stop what they are doing and wave back—age 9
- I've learned that if you laugh and drink soda pop at the same time, it will come out your nose—age 7
- I've learned that goldfish don't like Jell-O—age 5
- I've learned that girls sweat just as much as boys—age 11

These are the kind of things buzzing through the mind of a young person. The educator of young people must be tuned into and focused on this youthful train of thought before a connection can be made with youth audiences. An skilled educator is able to put themselves in the shoes of the people sitting in the audience.



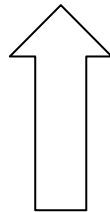
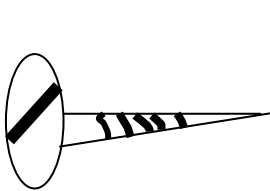
Teachable Moments

What do the letters TM stand for regarding the topic of teaching kids?

Many people guess things like time management, trademark, or even transcendental meditation. TM stands for “Teachable Moment.”

The trademark TM of an effective educator is the ability to devise and utilize the teachable moment. To set up a teachable moment is actually like setting a trap, and springing the trap on your victim at the opportune moment. When the trap has been sprung, the victim knows that they have been had, or in the case of education, they know what the point is as it is being made. The trap must not only be set properly, but educators must take the time and effort to even set the trap in the first place.

A great example of creating a “Teachable Moment” is the manner in which the information in this presentation is being presented. (Pointing to the down arrow/shorts symbol to be covered later on the newsprint) I’ll bet that all of you are anxious to know what this symbol of a “D” and a pair of shorts is all about! I’ll also bet that when I get to that point in a couple of minutes you will all be attentive and ready to hear the answer. That’s an example of creating a “Teachable Moment!”



Allow Kids to Screw Up

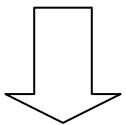
What do these two symbols mean? They mean screw up. We have to allow kids to mess up. That is, as long as they are in a safe environment we need to let them screw up. If we were teaching someone to operate a chain saw, we probably would not want to let them screw up to bad.

The truly life-long lessons that you’ve learned are those in which you have learned from your mistakes. Many times adults want to rescue their kids from adversity. When we do that, we rob young people of powerful learning experiences.



Leave them on a high point

What does this symbol represent? It represents mountains. What would a symbol of mountains have to do with a presentation about teaching kids? The point to be made here is to “leave them on a high point”. Many times educators pull out their best educational tricks at the start of class or at the start of the educational activity. If the “best trick” is used in the first 10 minutes of the activity and the last 50 minutes are “Boring!,” what will the kids remember on the way home? They will remember the boring part. Conclude the activity with your “best trick,” and that’s what will be remembered and that’s what they will talk about on the way home. Leave them on a high point with your best trick and they will come back for more at the next educational event or activity – and they might even bring a friend!



De-brief

What in the world could a down arrow and a pair of briefs mean? In order to explain this concept I need to tell a story about when I was in high school.

One of the funniest things that my friends and I would do in high school gym class, especially when the cheerleaders were in the gym, was to sneak up behind one of our unsuspecting classmates and pull their gym shorts down round their ankles. This was known at my high school as “de-briefing” someone.

What does this story have to do with teaching kids?

Educators many times do a tremendous job of education but then fail to stop, discuss what has just happened, and drive home their educational message in a good de-briefing session.

Fun!!

It has to be Fun!

The last concept that needs to be addressed as we discuss the art of teaching kids is the word “fun.” *(The presenter just writes the word fun in big letters anywhere on any of the flipchart papers on the wall)* If kids do not have fun while you are providing them a high quality educational experience, it will not be as effective as it could have been. And if it’s not fun you might find yourself alone at the next scheduled educational activity. If people are in the education business and do not realize the importance of this concept, they may not realize their full potential as an educator.

Making an educational experience fun with some well-placed and appropriate humor can also open doors to educational opportunities with sensitive or controversial issues that need to be addressed.

That concludes this presentation on The Art of Teaching Kids (And Crusty Old Codgers). Are there any questions?

Note: The symbol SPE is conspicuously placed on the wall on newsprint, on a sheet of its own. The SPE symbol is in very large and multi-colored print so that no one in the room can miss it. After you prematurely announce that the presentation is over, just sit back and wait for someone to ask, “What does SPE mean?”

SPE

Sneaky Prophylactic Education

Any clues as to the meaning of SPE? *(Write out the words on the flipchart paper as you say the meaning)* The S stands for sneaky, the P stands for prophylactic, and the E stands for education.

What in the world does sneaky prophylactic education mean? If you look up the word prophylactic in the dictionary, you will see that it means “preventative.” Preventative, refers to the fact that if we take a nine year old 4-H member and keep them busy for nine years, teach them a ton of subject matter for nine years, and teach them a wide variety of life skills so we produce a productive citizen at the age of 18—that is preventative. If we keep them busy for nine years while they are growing up—that’s preventative.

The sneaky part comes in when we make those nine years fun. When we make it fun, they (the kids) don’t even know we’ve done it (SPE)to them.

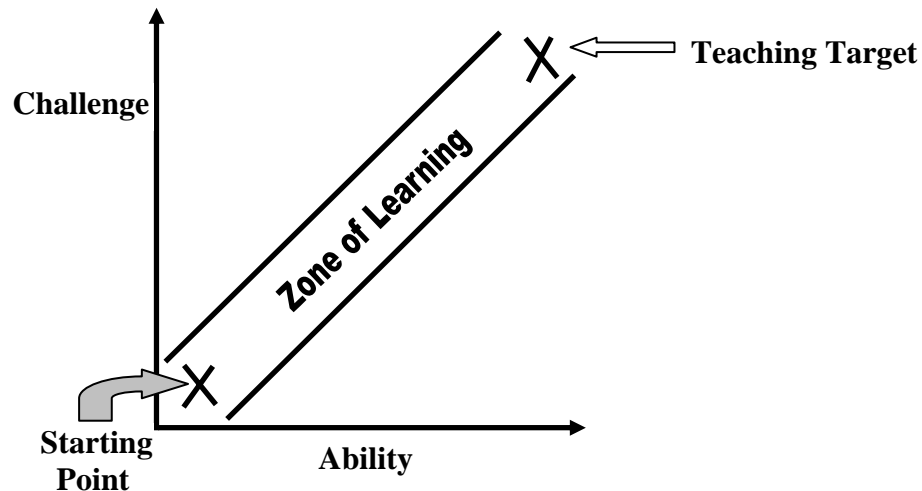
That’s what the letters SPE stand for.

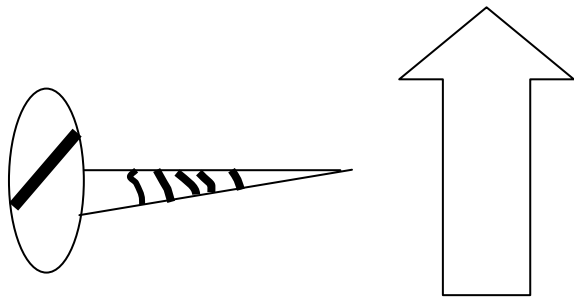
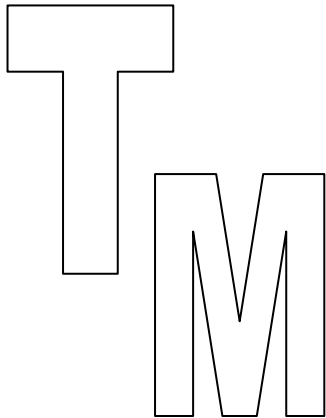
Some people have asked me why I don’t just use the term “Sneaky Preventative Education” instead. My response, “I probably would not have gained your attention as will if I would have said “Sneaky Preventative Education.”

The Art of Teaching Kids (And Crusty Old Codgers)

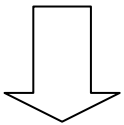
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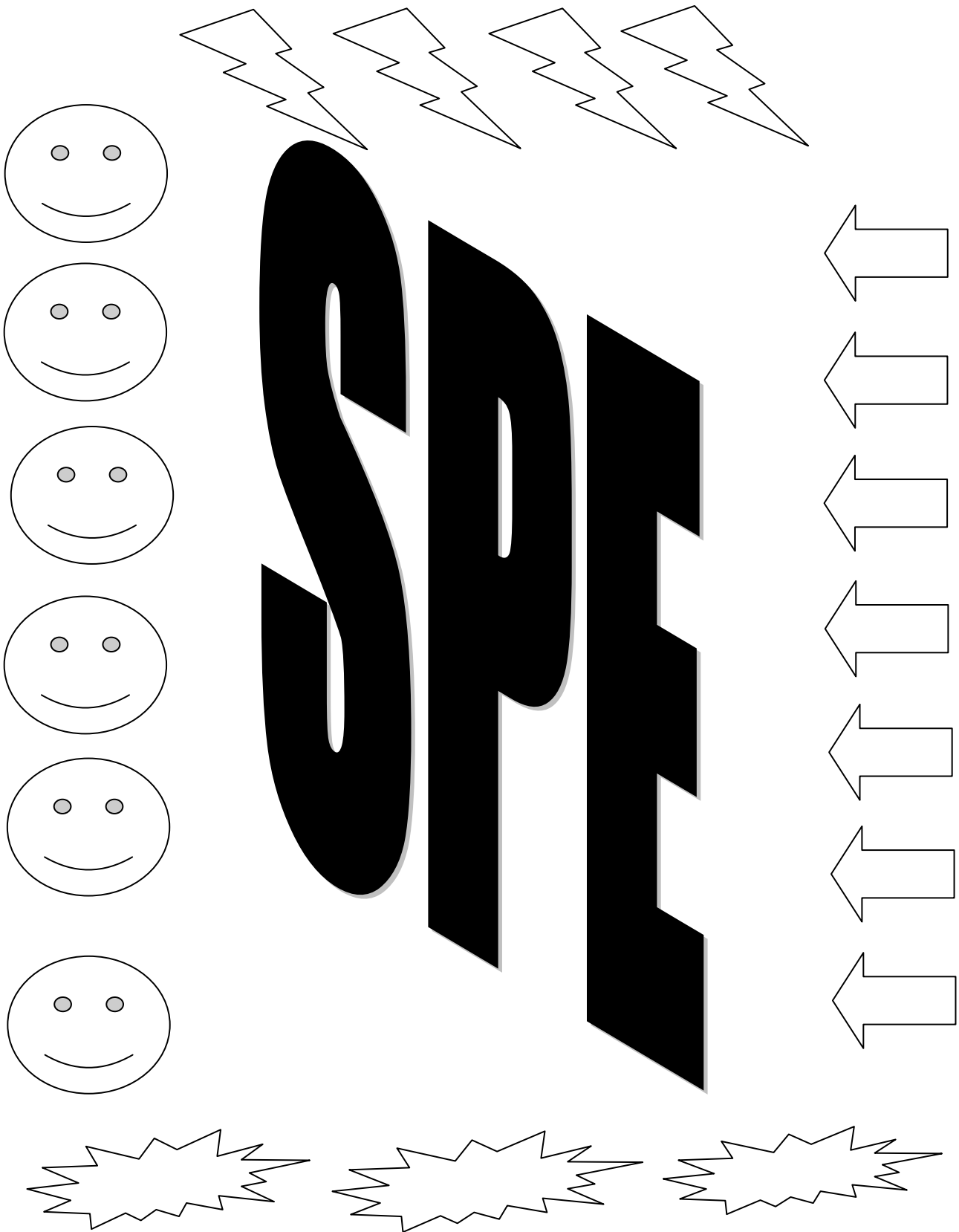
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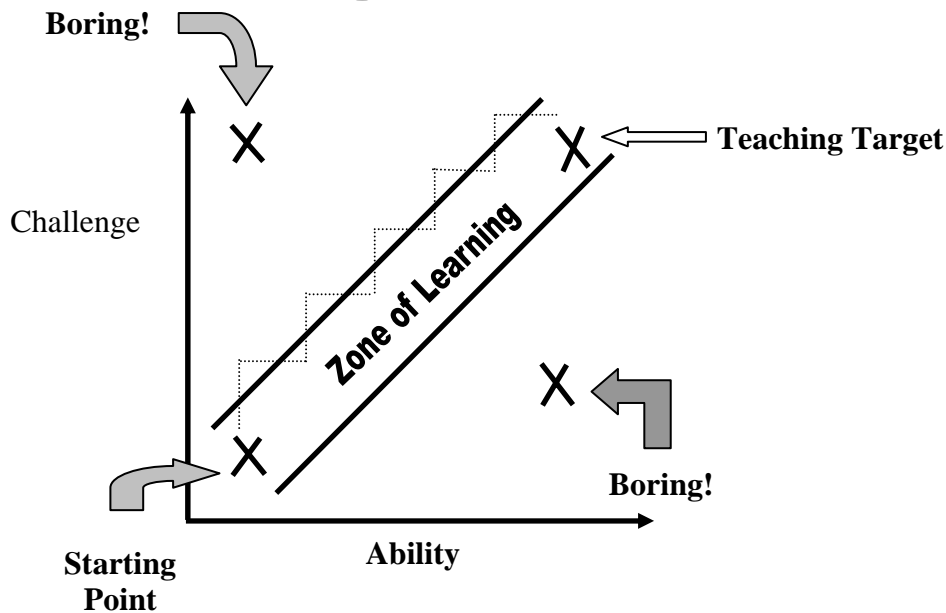
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The Art of Teaching Kids (And Crusty Old Codgers)

Ability
Balance
Challenge

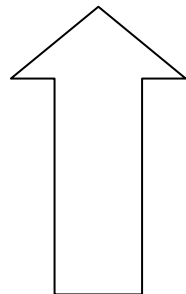
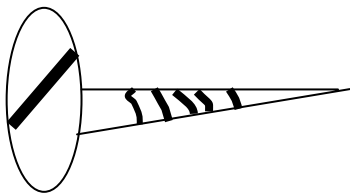


Tell Me – I Forget
Show Me – I Remember
Involve Me – I Understand



Focus on Kids

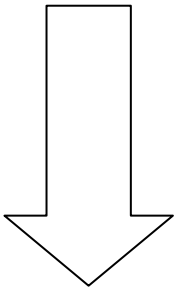
Teachable
Moment



Allow Kids to screw up!

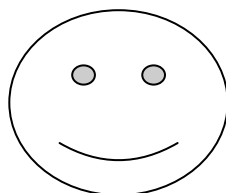
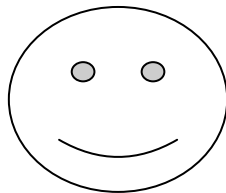
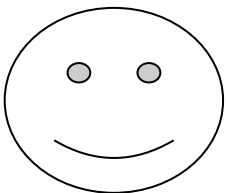
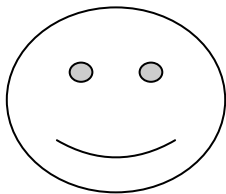
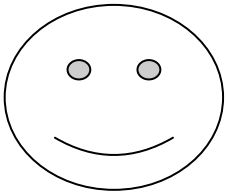
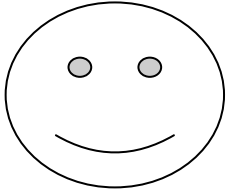
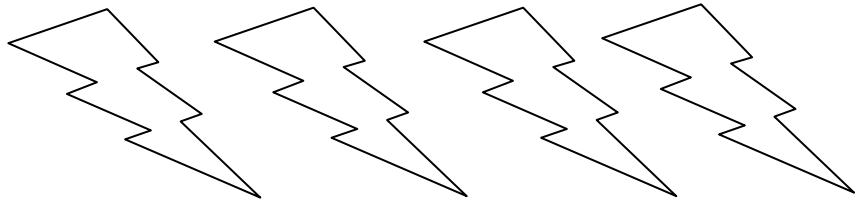


Leave'em on a high point!



De-brief

Fun!!



Sneaky

Prophylactic

Education

