

A Meeting Place for Learning

**By Cheryl Neubert,
Reading Specialist, NPHS**

In my lifetime before my own children, I taught elementary school children - first graders to be exact. Upon returning to the classroom, I was surprised to learn that I *love* teaching high school students! Maybe it was the experiences I had had with my own children growing up as teenagers, but I found my niche as a Reading teacher at the high school.

One would think that there is a huge difference. After all, teenagers don't like the same things that elementary students do. And one does not think of teaching in high school the way one does in elementary school. I was wrong, and happily so. I have found that these students with whom I have the privilege of working every day enjoy and thrive with many of the techniques I used for their elementary school counter parts.

For instance, teenagers love motivation. From homework passes, to Jolly Ranchers to "Going for the Gold!" and the "Million Word Reader," motivational

techniques work. Students excel as they strive to learn more, to get to the next level, to achieve, and to read. Motivation brings about conversation. Questions like, "How did you get such a high score on vocabulary?" to "What was the name of that book you just finished?" become common place. Open discussion about what is learned and how it is learned are owned by the students.

Dialogue is key as the students having these conversations have so much diversity. In my classroom, this is one of the greatest benefits. From all backgrounds, IEPs, general education, economically disadvantaged, and culturally diverse; these students find a commonality in learning - a meeting place for gaining knowledge. Scaffolding becomes something that is not only done by me, but by my students as well. There is pride as they are able to "teach" each other. Whether it is how to choose the next book, bring up software scores, or edit a piece of writing, suddenly everyone is on the same path to become a better reader. The journey now becomes one where we collectively come together to share and celebrate our successes!

