

PART I

***Classroom Practices
Across the Curriculum***

Classroom Management and Community Involvement

Overview, Chapters 1–5

1. **Chris Anderson**, a technology education teacher from Woodbury Heights, New Jersey, shares how to stay in control of your class at all times. From the all-important first phone call home to the many subtle ways of preventing disruptions, Chris encourages us to get to know our students and form bonds of mutual respect.

2. **Amy Stump**, an eighth-grade science teacher from Eloy, Arizona, takes a new approach to classroom management and encourages students to monitor each other's behavior. Students form groups and write their own behavioral and academic performance expectations. Kids take ownership of their work, and Amy enjoys a class that understands the reasons behind rule making.

3. **Julie M. Pepperman**, an eighth-grade science teacher and a parent herself from Knoxville, Tennessee, sees that as children grow through the educational system, parents are often alienated from the schools. Julie knows that only calling parents after a child misbehaves is like “asking for help to extinguish a fire after the building burned down.” That's why she gets parents involved early and often.

4. **Truman M. Savery**, a band director for fifth through twelfth grade from South Dakota, encourages his students to think about ways they can give back to the community as a band. One year, the band raised money to send a teacher to Boston so he could run in the Boston Marathon.

5. **Judy McEntegart**, a sixth-grade language arts teacher from Framingham, Massachusetts, invites local veterans to school to teach her students about Veterans Day. This day is not about the glory of war; rather, it is a way to involve the community in her class's education and to teach students about what ordinary men and women can do to protect the world and preserve peace.

1. The Process of Effective Classroom Management

Chris Anderson

Woodbury Heights, New Jersey

Recommended Level: Grades 6–8

Overall Objective: Teachers learn skills to effectively manage their class, both by preventing disruptions and by handling problems when they arise.

I loved when Mr. Longshaw gave me a hard time in high school. I was a typical smart-mouth student thinking I knew better than everyone else. But his attention, both negative and positive, was important to me and, looking back, was one of the reasons he was my favorite teacher. It may even be one of the reasons I am a teacher today. It comes down to something I didn't understand at the time but now see as methods of effective classroom management. These three simple words *effective classroom management* have so much meaning to many people. Both experienced and new teachers have ideas of how to successfully manage their students in a classroom setting.

Recently, I polled several student teachers I work with at a local college and asked them what classroom management meant for them. Most zeroed in on the idea that teachers need to know how to keep

students on task. However, there is much more to managing a classroom than most new teachers realize. Effective management in the classroom, as in business, involves being proactive, asserting ownership of one's classroom, and most important, coming to understand the very students you hope to manage. We must learn to stop looking at classroom management as a skill but, rather, as a process, one that we must engage in every day we stand in front of a classroom of students.

In that same survey, participants expressed hope to learn how to become "fast on their feet." Simply translated, this means they believed that, with time, they would one day develop a bulletproof list of scripted responses that could be thrown out at students when presented with almost any situation. As much as it is comforting to all of us who stand, day in and day out, in front of a classroom to believe that this magical list will one day appear, it is simply not true. Managing students in a classroom is about more than just reacting to the occasional crisis or behavioral problem. It is about being proactive and finding assertive solutions to problems that haven't even arisen yet, beginning even before day one.

So we begin with a technique that even the best of teachers feels reluctant to implement, that is, calling home. It can be uncomfortable and even frustrating, but this is one of the most effective ways to be a proactive classroom manager. Do not just wait until a student gets in trouble to call home, either. You should do it before the first day. If you begin your rapport with students and parents before class has even begun, it will change the entire dynamic of your classroom for the rest of the year. When students walk into class knowing you have already talked to their parents, they will recognize that you have a commitment above and beyond basic obligation. You have already spoken to (or at least left a message for) their parents; students will recognize that you will most likely have no problem continuing that relationship—particularly in regard to their behavior.

You cannot disappoint that expectation. Talking to parents can no longer be seen as a last-resort method for dealing with an unmanageable student but must be viewed as a continued dialogue. That means, do not call home only when there is trouble, but remember to call home when there is an accomplishment. For example, Mrs. Smith's son is a good student and never creates a problem for me. He's also not

the best at anything in particular, so in terms of teacher attention, neither he nor his mother receives frequent feedback from teachers. A call to work to convey something nice about her son provides the opportunity to brag to friends and could just make her day. You won't believe how many times I have phoned a parent after school or during their lunch break to report their child's successes. Some have even cried while on the line with me. Students, even the good ones, are so used to falling between the cracks—even when they accomplish something great—that sometimes the only way they can get noticed is through misbehavior or failing grades. Yet when a teacher takes time to share something incredible, all of a sudden it makes doing the “right things” seem that much more appealing.

This idea only begins to scratch the surface of the positives and negatives of behavior reinforcement. For instance, if you are having a bad day with a student (and it happens to even the best of educators), there is no shame in talking with the student at some point later in the day about your expectations. In addition, if you put a student down in front of the class or humiliate an individual in front of peers, it is crucial that you find a way to apologize or build this person up again while in front of the class—a one-on-one apology out in the hall will not make a public mistake right again. This not only helps to raise their confidence but also shows that you can be a fair and reasonable person. Treating a student with respect will never hurt your control over a classroom.

However, showing respect is not the same as backing down. Part of being an effective manager, an effective leader, and most important, an effective teacher is being, for lack of a better term, the alpha dog. The classroom is your world. If you show ownership of that world, your students will understand that, too. This is especially true for new teachers coming into a classroom. Take that room you are given and prove that it is now your own. Rearranging furniture, decorating to fit your tastes, and changing it to however suits you will show your new class that you are not simply a new teacher in an old teacher's room but that you are the ruler of this new world they have entered. Even subtly setting this tone will alter how your students react and behave in this new and unfamiliar classroom, your classroom. Of course, this new room should also be accompanied by a confident, knowledgeable classroom leader.

I have always believed evangelists and comedians understand stage presence. Students, as a whole, are some of the most intuitive people a person will ever face. They can decipher moods of their teachers and even their insecurities. This is why a strong classroom presence is so important. Never let them see you sweat. It is a cliché, but it's true. If you allow yourself to resort to sarcasm or to be baited into arguing, you will show them you have lost control of your world. Having ownership of this world that you created also means you cannot hand power over to an outsider. The minute you send a student out of class or down to an administrator, you show students you are not capable of managing your own classroom, and that is a weakness that will be exploited.

An alternative to succumbing to those classic classroom traps is to wield your authority in more subtle ways. Make eye contact with a student who begins to act out. If that isn't enough, stand by their desk; and if that doesn't work, place your hand on their desk as you continue with your lesson. Usually, the close proximity of an instructor will be enough to warn them against further transgressions. If they continue, do not be afraid to warn them that their seat will be moved. Of course, the next step after issuing the warning should be to move their seat, because students can see empty threats and will not hesitate to scoff at your authority if such threats prove fruitless.

Ultimatums are strictly your last resort. There are better ways to reach a student than a "this or that" threat. Kids, even the toughest cases, actually want to do the right thing. The most challenging students need the most attention. Lavish them with attention. The greatest thing you can do for challenging students is to give them a job. Having a role within the classroom increases their level of responsibility and makes them feel they have a place in your classroom. It is easier to label kids as problems rather than take the time to actually get to know them and help them.

As educators and mentors, we must think of struggling students not as problems, nothing more than annoyances to be passed over, but as challenges presented to us. They are there to make us earn our pay. You must strive to reach these kids not only in the classroom but on the playing fields or in the parking lot. Become more than a teacher they see for 40 minutes a day. Become an adviser, a coach, or maybe just a fan. Volunteer to start a club or coach a sport, or go to home games and

show your students you are committed. Students can be entirely different outside a classroom environment, and if you meet them in other places, then maybe your relationship will improve.

One technique I use in the classroom is the cultivation of “social capital.” I reinforce positive behaviors with a type of figurative currency that students can spend. For example, the first two students who complete their warm-up (or anticipatory set), might have the option to pick the radio station we listen to during an activity. Another example would be to allow students to have control over more of the social decisions. This could include where they sit, when they can leave to use the lavatory, or any other terms and conditions within the classroom culture or environment that might otherwise be my call exclusively.

Above all, we must remember that students are people too, and they are not adults. Kids have a much harder time placing themselves in the shoes of others, and as a result, their empathy for their peers and their instructors seems limited. It is not. Second, the best thing about kids is that each day is a brand new day, a clean slate. As adults we often forget the true ability of adolescents to make a fresh start. For a teacher, that means every day is a new day to make a difference and another day to prove how effective our classroom-management skills truly are.

2. Developing Collaboration With Peers

Amy Stump
Eloy, Arizona

Recommended Level: Grades 6–8

Overall Objective: Create a classroom environment fostering positive collaboration among students. Students will develop norms and roles that are used throughout the year during group activities to develop positive collaboration with peers.

Standards Met (Arizona):

Workplace Skills: (4) Students work individually and collaboratively within team settings to accomplish objectives.

Materials Needed:

- Paper and pencils
- Bread
- Blindfolds (strips of fabric work well)*
- Butter knives
- Peanut butter and jelly
- Plates

*optional

Engagement

Divide students into groups of three or four. Start this lesson with an example focusing on the importance of working together to solve a problem or accomplish a task. One student from each group puts on the blindfold. The peanut butter, jelly, bread, plate, and butter knife are placed in front of the student. The remaining members of the group take turns telling the blindfolded student what to do to make a PB and J sandwich and divide it for each of them. The blindfolded students can only do what their teammates tell them. You could do this without the blindfold, but the blindfold makes it more interesting. Allow time for the students to eat the fruits of their accomplishment (the sandwiches). They work as a team to clean their tables and put away the supplies. Conclude this part of the lesson with a group discussion about what went well and not so well when they built the sandwich. I list the positives and negatives on the board.

Team Expectations

Write the following instructions on the board for students:

Individually, write on a separate piece of paper. What are your expectations for your team this school year? List three expectations. List one reason for each expectation.

I explain what the word *expectation* means, what to expect from yourself and your team members during group activities. After about five minutes, students rejoin their teams. Together, they discuss their individual expectations and pick the three most important expectations, referring to the positive and negative PB and J outcomes. All team members must agree. Then, write the Team Expectations template on the board; instruct the students to copy the template and write their team expectations in the front of their notebooks. All students are required to sign each other's notebooks.

Team Expectations
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
We agree to the expectations listed above:
X _____
X _____
X _____
X _____

This process takes about five minutes. Explain that during the year, if group members are not living by expectations, other team members should remind them of their commitment. Periodically throughout the year, team members rate themselves and their teammates on how well they have adhered to team expectations. I usually have teams do this four to five times throughout the year after a group activity.

Team Roles

The last portion of the lesson establishes roles within the teams of students: manager, inquisitor, record keeper, and material handler. These are not static, and role assignments can change if students agree. Students, in their teams, discuss the strengths of their team members. For example, one student may excel at organization while another's strength may be to write clearly. Allow three minutes for group discussion, and then tell the students to select who will fill which role and to write the roles of team members in their notebooks. I print the roles (you can fit four sets of roles to one piece of paper) and have students tape the roles into their notebooks. This enables students to refer back to the responsibilities of each role, and if they want to switch roles later, they have the information to make adjustments within their team.

Manager. Fill in for team members who are absent. Make sure all team members participate in the activity. Help team members with their roles.

Inquisitor. Ask relevant questions: “What do we know about the issue or problem?” “Do we need to know something else?” and “If we do, how are we going to get the information?”

Record Keeper. Write down information and data generated during the group activity and share with the team.

Material Handler. Make sure all materials are at the table, set up materials, and put them away at the end of the activity.

I conclude the lesson by telling the students that all members must participate in group activities. “It’s not my role” should never be an excuse for doing nothing. Helping team members is encouraged and expected. After the next group activity, I have students rate themselves and their teammates according to the expectations written during this activity (see the sample rating sheet).

Your Name: _____ Date: _____

Instructions: Rate yourself and your teammates for each team expectation during today’s activity. Ratings run from 1 through 5, with 1 meaning *did not meet* the expectation and 5 meaning *fully met* the expectation.

Team Expectation	Name:	Name:	Name:	Name:
1.	Rating:	Rating:	Rating:	Rating:
2.	Rating:	Rating:	Rating:	Rating:
3.	Rating:	Rating:	Rating:	Rating:

Written goals can then be set for teams who are not meeting team expectations. These goals are set by the team and are assessed at the end of each group activity. As soon as a goal is met, a new one is set until all teams are meeting expectations.

Helpful Tips

- I find it helpful to have supplies for the engagement activity at tables on trays. This allows the classroom to run smoothly and quickly since students don't need to leave their seats for supplies.
- Posting collaborative types of quotes and student roles throughout the classroom reminds students of their responsibilities. Roles could be illustrated throughout the classroom for quick reference for students who participate in special education or who are younger.

3. Successful Classroom-Management Strategies

Julie M. Pepperman
Knoxville, Tennessee

Recommended Level: Grades 6–8

Overall Objective: Prevent classroom misbehaviors by being fair and consistent and getting parents involved in their children's education *before* students act up.

When I began teaching, the only books I found on successful classroom management addressed elementary grades. I tried to adapt these strategies to the middle school level, but they weren't effective. Let's face it, most eighth-graders do not care whether their names appear on the green light or the yellow light. My eighth-graders were, and still are, smart enough to know just how far to push the limits before serious consequences are invoked. Think about it, these kids have been in school for as long as nine years (if they attended kindergarten) and have experienced many different teaching personalities, styles, and classroom-management techniques. They know the game.

In most cases, the students who want to obey and follow the rules, do and the ones who don't, won't. I needed something better, something that would appeal to these "almost high schoolers." I needed to develop a plan that fit my personality and teaching style. Through trial and error, I discovered that if a classroom-management plan doesn't fit how you teach or if it doesn't mesh with your personality, you won't stick with it. When you forget to implement your plan, even one time, you have lost all credibility with your middle school students.

I noticed the one thing that really seemed to bother my students was when they perceived something as being unfair. This notion of fairness, or lack thereof, led to many arguments among themselves and their teachers. The trick was realizing that my idea of fair and theirs is not the same. Eighth-graders' cognitive development is not quite at the stage where they can understand that fair and equal are not the same. As the adult in the room, I was fair to all my students, but from the students' perspective, I was not. For example, when I gave a student a chance to turn in work late with no consequences, other students found out and became disgruntled because it wasn't "fair." They didn't know that the night before, that student had a legitimate family emergency. In the interest of student privacy, I couldn't announce to the class, "Anne has permission to turn in her homework late for full credit because her dad had a heart attack." I could, however, set a policy with the class. I told them that sometimes, as a teacher, I would know things in their personal lives that might affect their schoolwork. They wouldn't want private matters shared with the rest of the students. I asked them to trust me to judge each situation individually.

Many students never had a teacher willing to judge them individually instead of applying a blanket policy. Of course, every year I have to prove my trustworthiness to a new group of students. But every year, it takes less time because I start to earn a reputation among the students. Yes, they actually talk about their teachers over the summer. They advise younger brothers, sisters, and friends on how to "handle" this teacher or that teacher. Students have tried to fake me out by claiming a family situation that doesn't exist, but those issues quickly come to light. After you establish your fairness with the students, then you need to move on to the second step, which is consistency.

Consistency, on the middle school level as well as in life, means doing what you say you are going to do when you say you are going to

do it. Period. Even the students you think are not paying any attention to you are keeping track of how often you follow through with your plans. This includes plans on discipline, classwork, class goals, and class rewards. Even without stating it, you have entered a contract with your students. You are saying, "I am the teacher, and I need to be in charge of the class. The class will be a safe place where all students can learn and express their ideas without ridicule. I will treat you fairly and with respect, and in return, you will do the same." The students are saying, "Even if we don't express it, we want to learn. We want to be treated with fairness and respect. We want school to be a place where we can grow and be successful." Every time you as the teacher and adult in the room fail to be consistent, whether it's something to do with academics or with classroom management, you are saying, "Even though I don't hold up my end of the bargain, I still expect you to." Middle school students will quickly see through this and come to view you as untrustworthy. Once that happens, limited learning will occur in the classroom.

I employed my strategy of fairness and consistency for a few years, and it was working, but I thought it could work better and there seemed to be something missing. I finally figured out what it was while chatting with a parent who I ran into at the grocery store. She said, "It was so much easier when Kevin was younger. I always knew what was going on at school because, for one, he would still talk to me about his day. Now he just says his day went 'fine.' The second reason I knew about his day was because the teacher would send home little notes and newsletters. We would even get an occasional phone call. I loved getting those calls telling me about something special he did."

We talked for a few minutes and said our goodbyes, but what she said stayed with me. I, too, used to receive positive phone calls, newsletters, and notes home about my daughter. I loved hearing about her day. I loved and valued this contact from the school, but I never thought of doing the same for middle school students' parents. After all, my students were big eighth-graders getting ready to go to high school and then on to college. Weren't they supposed to be learning how to be independent? Weren't parents supposed to be letting go, at least a little? I thought back and didn't remember receiving personalized school-to-home communication when I was an eighth-grader.

Through my professional development, I read studies where parents said they felt left out of their child's education by the time they reached middle school. They often expressed feeling uncomfortable volunteering at school or even contacting the teacher. This was especially true for parents whose own educational background is limited or who are non-English speakers or are economically disadvantaged.

All of a sudden it clicked. In the past, I called parents after a behavior issue, but by that time, the student was in trouble and received consequences. I realized it was like asking for help to extinguish a fire after the building burned down. What you're really doing here is damage control. I decided to try something different. The next year, I set a goal to contact all of my 135 students' parents. It wasn't easy. In one or two cases I used a translator, and some parents didn't have current contact information on file. It required a great deal of effort on my part, and it was worth every minute. By establishing a relationship with the parent before the child has any trouble or before I ask for volunteers, I create an atmosphere of teamwork. I show I care about my students and I am enthusiastic about my profession.

We all hear that successful education occurs when there is a partnership with the school, the student, and the parent. This maxim also holds true for classroom management. If I have a problem with a student's behavior, it is easier to get parental support if there is an existing relationship. Through initial communication, parents feel they know me a little and are willing to listen to my solutions to problems with an open mind. Does it work all the time? No. Are there always going to be parents who think you are singling out their child? Yes. However, the instances of this happening are fewer than before. In addition, positive phone calls can reduce the number of negative instances. Every now and then, pick up the phone or write a short note to parents about something unique, funny, or impressive their child did.

Parents love hearing it, and students love the positive attention they receive at home. This sends a message that you care. Parents want caring teachers who help their child succeed in school. The middle school years are a special and unique time in a child's life. One day they seem like adults, and the next they seem like little kids. Sometimes, they go back and forth several times in the same day! A teacher should take it in stride and react in a calm manner while being fair and consistent.

Students will notice and will respect you for it. Once you gain their respect and trust, you can teach them anything.

4. Taking Ownership

Truman M. Savery
Hot Springs, South Dakota

Recommended Level: Grades 6–8

Overall Objective: Each student learns how *taking ownership* goes beyond the classroom and into the community, beyond school pride, and also beyond inclusion of students with special needs.

Living in and teaching in a small school in Hot Springs, South Dakota, I have brought one mission to my students, and that is to take ownership of their music program. Ownership is very specific and goes beyond the classroom. Ownership for my students means learning to impact lives by recognizing and showing respect for the unique contributions and achievements of each individual. My community, whose population includes many veterans and individuals with special needs, presents numerous opportunities to learn this.

My inspiration as a teacher goes back to when I was a teenager. I remember a teacher asking me to help out with Special Olympics. At first, I wasn't sure whether I wanted to, but I decided to help. I watched parents, teachers, and other onlookers in tears of joy when their student crossed the finish line. You must understand the joy and unbelievable excitement they were experiencing, because these students' parents, teachers, and coaches were told these students with special needs would never achieve this type of triumph. The competitors cheered each other on, and it didn't matter whether they finished first or last; each competitor crossed with enthusiasm. I left that Special Olympics with a different perspective on life and accomplishments. At first, I thought I should go into special education, but I decided that my greatest desire was in music. In high school, I was an athlete and also a member of both band and choir. Before going into college, I remember thinking that perhaps one day I would start a band—one that embraces students with special needs.

After many years of teaching, I had a chance to pull out an old dream: There are many community members with special needs who have an interest in contributing to a band. The only way that this adventure was possible was for people in my community and my students to buy into this dream and dare to start something new. Out of this desire, a community band was born in a once-thriving music community. Citizens began writing about how exciting it was to have the band at veteran memorials, performances in parks, and at senior-living facilities. I honor veterans at every concert. The popularity of band is alive again.

Prior to my arrival, the community lost several directors in a short period of time. The repeated turnover of band directors created a problem: Students began skipping practice. My desire to serve this community and bring new life to the music program motivated me to be successful in my teaching career. Along the way, I discovered it is more important for students to become lifetime music lovers than for them to earn top scores at concerts. Students and the community taking ownership is the most important achievement. When visitors come, we hear how excited they are about our band program.

Many music students are involved in fundraisers to pay for trips and other adventures. Students must learn to give back to the community and do things for the sake of ownership. Giving back to the community greatly outweighs what the community could ever give back to the youth. One year at another school, my band sent a local teacher to the Boston Marathon. This was a huge achievement and impacted the community. The creativity to plan acts of kindness or other adventures must exist for students to give back to the community. For example, our school band and community band performed during a silent movie at our local theater.

Teachers should look for opportunities to impact their school and community: Take ownership, and teach your students to take ownership. There are many exciting adventures and joys to experience. Share your wealth of knowledge and commitment with others, and teach them to do the same. Impact lives, and when you feel like you have reached your plateau, realize that ownership goes further than the classroom. It is rewarding when the students finally understand the phrase *taking ownership*.

5. Parent Involvement: Heroes Among Us

Judy McEntegart
Framingham, Massachusetts

Recommended Level: Grade 6

Overall Objective: Students will know and appreciate the significance of Veterans Day. Students will have an opportunity to meet and listen to firsthand stories from a veteran and be able to ask questions to deepen their understanding of what it means to be a veteran. Students will appreciate the sacrifices made by ordinary men and women to keep this country free and safe, as well as to keep the world safe.

Standards Met (Massachusetts):

Language: (1) Discussion: Students will use agreed-upon rules for informal and formal discussions in small and large groups; (2) Questioning, Listening, and Contributing: Students will pose questions, listen to the ideas of others, and contribute their own information or ideas in group discussions or interviews to acquire new knowledge.

Reading and Literature: (7) Understanding a Text: Students will identify basic facts and main ideas in a text and use them as a basis for interpretation.

Materials Needed:

- Letters for parents and veterans organizations, interview questions
- Light breakfast food
- Thank-you notes
- Place for reception

In early November, my colleagues, parents, students, and I host a Veterans Appreciation Day. At open house in late September or early October, all sixth-grade teachers explain the program and invite parents to participate. We give them a letter again explaining the program. The letter includes a tear-off section that is to be returned to school. The

parents can indicate they will participate if they are veterans (or give names of veterans they know will be able to participate), contribute food for the light reception, or help host the light reception.

One sixth-grade student is assigned to each veteran. The student meets the veteran in the office and acts as an escort and guide. The two-hour program begins with a light reception; parents greet the veterans and serve the food. After the reception, the students escort the veterans to the appointed classrooms, and each veteran meets with a separate group of students. The student escort introduces the veteran to the members of the group, and the sharing begins. During the discussion time, the veteran shares stories prompted by questions from the students. After 20 minutes, the students change groups to hear another veteran. I have found that meeting with two veterans is enough for the students and the veterans. At the end of the discussions, the student escorts guide the veterans back to the reception room, where I thank them before they return home.

The preparation for this event has many facets. Not only do I invite veteran parents and relatives of our students but also veterans from the community. I go to the Veterans Council meeting during September with my invitations. The council is composed of representatives of all the veterans' groups in town. In turn, they bring the information to their groups. It is important to give an RSVP phone number and e-mail address. In October, my students read historical fiction novels based on World War II and the Vietnam War to gain some background knowledge. They keep a response novel while reading these books and attend three literature circle discussion groups in class.

I also prepare a lesson on the history of Veterans Day and, after presenting this information and discussing it, I assign my students an activity where they interview three adults about Veterans Day. I encourage them to find a veteran to interview. The questions for the adults are, "What is Veterans Day?" "What does Veterans Day mean to you?" and "What activities have you attended to celebrate Veterans Day?" The questions for the veteran are, "What military group did you serve with?" "Your rank?" "Where and when did you serve?" and "What does Veterans Day mean to you?" After the interview with the veteran, I tell students to invite them to our celebration. For the most part, this activity is interesting and exciting for the students. When it

is due, they share their findings with the class. Most are quite proud when reading about their relatives. Many are finding out information they never knew about their parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, and neighbors. This begins a deeper understanding of what it means to be a veteran.

Just before the event, we brainstorm questions to ask our guests. We talk about appropriate questions and behavior. I remind them we are honoring these individuals for their sacrifices, bravery, and duty. The focus is to appreciate what these ordinary men and women did to protect the world and preserve peace. *It is not about the glory of war.* In addition, we talk about how a veteran may become emotional while relating a story. If this happens, I tell them to be respectful by being quiet to let the veteran regain composure. In this situation, the student host will then offer the veteran water and, when the time is right, ask what the veteran's favorite food was while serving. This has not happened often, but it helps to have a plan.

This activity has given an opportunity for family members of the sixth-grade students and veterans of the community to share their valuable stories. For the students, they experience firsthand primary-source information. Most important, students learn why they have no school on November 11 and see patriotism, bravery, duty, and sacrifice in person in veterans. After the celebration, the students write thank-you letters to the veterans they met and include specific information that they learned.