

In February 2004, certified educators employed at Bethel Junior High, Spanaway, Washington comparable to educators employed in most facilities, collaboratively initiated and actively participated in an intensive four-week mathematics word problem preparation campaign geared specifically towards increasing student performance on the WASL - *Washington Assessment of Student Learning* the state equivalent to Georgia's CRCT - *Criterion Referenced Competency Test*.

Unbeknownst at the time, almost immediately the educational pendulum had swung rapidly from traditional skill and drill instruction to collaborative performance-based assessments. In retrospect, we were tactfully being charged with implementing the colossal transition into the "new math."

The mind-numbing insignificant obsolete resources we were provided instantly proved to be nonconductive to student learning as children were unable to apply the concepts to their personal lives.

Initially the process was met with major resistance specifically by those who had a deeply engrained perception of success with the traditional format; however, the change facilitators wholeheartedly endorsed the process as inevitably it alluded to enriched learning and long-term retention of the material.

**The primary objectives behind initiating *The Daughtry Times*® may be identified as follows:**

- *Bored with traditional mathematical equations regarding the prices of apples, oranges, and related insignificant items students are highly unlikely to express interest*
- *Enable students to not only grasp the material however, more importantly apply the concept outside the traditional classroom setting as opposed to routine memorization of mathematical facts and formulas reserved solely for test taking purposes*
- *Increased emphasis and to assume a proactive role in the implementation and integration of reading and writing across the curriculum*
- *Evident teacher, student, and parent frustration with the extensive difficulty in legitimately justifying real-world application as well as the purpose behind the material being taught*
- *Compliance in establishing a standards-based mathematics classroom which research had continuously supported and therefore, proven conducive to student learning*
- *Ongoing interest with integrating current events in reading, writing, and mathematics*

The following activities were created and disseminated weekly the entire month prior to the inaugural *Daughtry Times* and were simply titled "Mr. Daughtry's Short Answer Responses." While it took a great deal of time to design these inquiries, the students thoroughly enjoyed the following six real-world application assignments and their WASL scores reflected their retention and application of the material.

[Pre-Daughtry Times I](#) | [Pre-Daughtry Times II](#) | [Pre-Daughtry Times III](#)  
[Pre-Daughtry Times IV](#) | [Pre-Daughtry Times V](#) | [Pre-Daughtry Times VI](#)

After a series of verbal reprimands accompanied by threats of forthcoming written disciplinary measures by an inexperienced twenty-something former science teacher recently evolved into authoritarian administrator for "pushing kids too hard", providing "too many word problems" and finally, "our kids can't handle this" approach just encouraged me all the more to make a noticeable difference in instruction.

Approximately 2,735 miles and 18 months later in Stockbridge, Georgia, four months after shattering previously established standardized test records at the county level, enough parental concerns regarding the complexity of the material had surfaced to where instantaneous termination of *The Daughtry Times* appeared to be imminent. I relied upon a rather simplistic defense, "Our students will rise or fall to the expectation established by the teacher. If I pull the plug now I will not accept responsibility for the detrimental repercussions."

Confident with the fact that the long-term value of this instructional material expands above and beyond a few (dozen) dissatisfied parents, a comprehensive and informative letter was presented to the administration defending the position of *The Daughtry Times* as a key element in maintaining an environment conducive to Blooms' Taxonomy textbook definition of critical/higher-level thinking and student learning. Karen Waldon, school principal and solid instructional leader who interestingly enough, now serves as our assistant superintendent provided essential support and stated in August 2008, "*The Daughtry Times revolutionized math instruction at Austin Road.*"

The official and rather lucrative *Daughtry Times* webpage was launched in August 2007 initially as a pay-per-use educational resource site. When it became evident that the primary client base consisted of former students and current teachers seeking to challenge their students academically coupled with an ethical dilemma, in January 2008, access to the site became free for all. Fortunately, the *Times* didn't miss a tick and is continuously being used by dozens of parents and teachers to reinforce instruction weekly.