



# Power Lines

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Florida League of Middle Schools

www.flms.org

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## Every Kid Needs A Champion

Don't miss *this TED Talk* by Rita Pierson, titled 'Every kid needs a champion.'



# Building Positive School Culture

By Terri Golden

Teaming leads to improved work climate, increased parental contact, increased job satisfaction, and is associated with higher student achievement (Flowers, Mertens, Mulhall, 1999). At Florida Virtual School (FLVS), we established a team culture in our 6th and 7th grade teams. Teaming is thriving in the virtual world. At FLVS, our skillful educators have adopted the middle school philosophy which is engaging learners even in a virtual setting, creating a family type culture, increasing parental contact, and strengthening job satisfaction.

In *Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century*, the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development recommends creating "small communities for learning where stable, close, mutually respectful relationships with adults and peers are considered fundamental for intellectual development and personal growth" (p. 9). To create small communities and build relationships virtually, the FLVS teams offer a plethora of activities. We start the year with virtual Parent and Student Open Houses to ease the new students into the unique learning environment, and to ensure the success of the first weeks of online education. This also allows students and parents to meet the teacher and other students.

To assist in creating virtual groups and build long distance relationships, our students produce many types of relationship connecting activities like: Student Council Meetings, Bring Your Pet to School Day, School Spirit Day, Parent Curriculum Night, Book Clubs, Sports Day, Pajama Day, Talent Shows, Lessons with Children in London, and even Kiss a Pig Contest. I have implemented collaborating activities that involve families and communities like Virtual Movie Night, Letters to the Military, Donations to Food Banks, Toiletry Drives for Homeless, and Staff Appreciation. Implementing Student Led Conferences (SLCs) allows me to engage students and their families in conferences at which students communicate their progress toward all academic learning targets and habits of scholarship.

An SLC it is not just communication - it's conversation. As we know with friends, family, or medical professionals, it is imperative to have two-sided conversations. Conversations are often a missing link for educators when it comes to connecting with parents. We start these conversations in the Parent Open House or during Welcome Calls where we learn their preferred method of communication. We continue that two-way communication all year using various methods. To create community, we offer online parent/teacher conferences and Family Nights. Family Nights include book talks for our class novels, Tech Talk, Khan Math site help demonstrations, Family Collaboration, and a Scavenger Hunt. The students develop, produce and present the entire Family Night production which leads to a strong gathering of students and parents scattered all over the state of Florida.

# Building Positive School Culture

By Terri Golden

We bring a positive school culture by having the teachers compete between 6th and 7th grades. The teachers have promised to throw a pie in the face of the losing team during the In-Service Training for FLVS staff. We add to the family feeling by starting each meeting with the team creed:

## In This School...

We do second chances  
We apologize  
We forgive  
We respect each other  
We keep our promises  
We never give up  
We encourage one another  
We laugh often  
We belong...  
**We are a family**

The students take this to heart, as already in the third week of school, they are writing on papers that they turn in and emails that say, "We are Family." Last year a mom told me that her son met his best friend in one of our online activities. She also communicated to me that her son had never felt more love than when he won the Pumpkin Carving Contest. She articulated to me that all the students and teachers congratulated him and he felt really special, like he belonged!

# Building Positive School Culture

By Terri Golden

Teacher and Parent contact is greatly increased on these teams. All FLVS teachers communicate a lot with the students and parents. Since the four core 6th and 7th grade teachers share the same students, they communicate daily to make sure that each student is successful with an individual plan, and then they pass this information on to the parents. The students have a homeroom teacher that weekly reaches out to each family to discuss the student's progress in each class. This helps build relationships with the family and ensures success for that student. Due to the constant contact of texting, calling, emailing, virtual offices, Oovooing, Skyping, and Facetiming, the student hears from different educators many times a week. We also operate student and teacher meetings in Blackboard Collaborate and Google Hangouts. We use Google Voice, cell phones, Google Docs, text, and email to maintain two-way communication with parents and students. The students may communicate any time with their teacher to gain knowledge, set up a tutor session, review for a test or to just check in. Students even like to send in pictures showing their team spirit or Facetime to show off a new haircut.

Due to these culture building activities, the students are much more engaged. Before the students were immersed into this family type atmosphere, the average 6th grade class would have approximately 14 students drop out during the grace period. This year, the teaming cohort had only one student drop out during the second week of school. The students know they must turn in work each week in order to participate in the fun activities, so they do! Many 6th grade teachers have 8-10 percent non-workers in the class, yet the teachers that participate in the cohort team have 1-7 percent non-workers. At the end of last year, 98 percent of the parents reported to us that they would love to continue in the teaming atmosphere in the virtual world. We have plans to increase the teaming to the 8th grade students next year. The middle school philosophy is successful in the FLVS virtual school world!

## References:

Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1989). *Turning Points: Preparing American youth for the 21st century*. New York, NY: The Carnegie Corporation.

Flowers, N., Mertens, S.B., & Mulhall, P.F. (1999). The Impact of Teaming: Five Research- Based Outcomes. *Middle School Journal*, 31 (2), 57-60.

What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future. NCTAF, PO Box 5239, Woodbridge, VA 22194.

# Pre-Engineering STEM Academy Students Experience a Rigorous and Exciting Program

At Greco Middle School, Written By Carla Sparks

The Greco Engineering STEM Academy had a wonderful year full of learning, fun, successes and excitement. STEM Students participated in manufacturing day by taking a tour of Somatron. This field trip was sponsored by FLATE at the Brandon campus of Hillsborough Community College (HCC), along with Made in Florida. The manufacturing day was a statewide initiative that resulted in thousands of students visiting manufacturing facilities to learn about the various job opportunities available in high tech manufacturing. The tour of Somatron was valuable to the students, as it showed them how a small business operates while doing worthwhile work. Somatron is the creator of acoustic therapy furniture.

Other STEM Academy field trips included a visit to Kennedy Space center, a tour of the engineering lab at HCC Brandon campus, and a trip to Sea World.

Eighth grade students in the STEM Academy presented their final capstone projects to a panel of judges, or “Sharks,” on May 27, 2016. The STEM students were tasked to exhibit technical expertise to solve a challenging problem that resulted in some sort of tangible product.



Pre-Engineering STEM Academy 8th graders present their  
Capstone Projects to judges.

# Pre-Engineering STEM Academy Students Experience a Rigorous and Exciting Program

*At Greco Middle School, Written By Carla Sparks*

The students worked to create new products that are innovative and valuable. They also created a company that owns the product and idea. The students considered the Sharks as potential investors and business partners. The Sharks had a fictional fortune to spend on these ideas.

Groups of 8th graders presented their products and investment deals to the Sharks in hopes of getting their company funded. During the school year, the students developed all of the following to present to the judges: concept outline, budget, research paper, 3D printed prototype, display board, business documents (business card, website, etc.), PowerPoint presentation, company logo and slogan.

This was a culminating project representing the students' skills developed throughout their three years in the STEM Academy. The capstone projects captured the essence of STEM and the rigors of the program to prepare them for life in high school and beyond.

The Academy implements a cohort model in which 132 students share the same teachers for math, science, social studies, Language Arts, and Technology Education for the three years they are enrolled at Greco.

# Top Tech Tips by Terri

<http://ifaketext.com>

For Flipped Classroom-They make fake text and bring it to class to share

For directions when students enter the virtual office

To discuss the theme of a story

To describe how to complete a Math problem

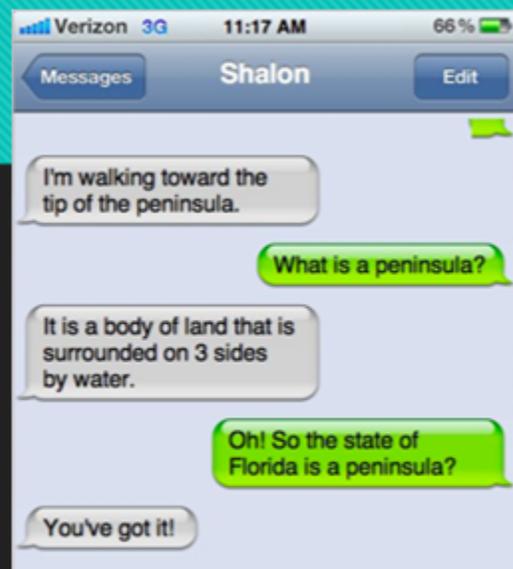
To translate a Spanish conversation

using  
**FAKE  
TEXTS**  
to connect &  
engage students



## Text in Any Class

- Students could write dialog between:
- Two book characters from a scene in a story
- Two animals (including some facts about them)
- Two historic figures
- Two friends discussing a book, movie, or event.
- Defining Vocabulary
- Talking with a friend about Science concept
- Helping a friend with a Math concept
- Work through a career or tech problem



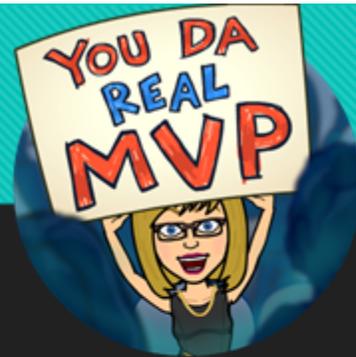
# Top Tech Tips by Terri

## Add QR Codes For Engaging Lessons



Exit Slips  
Newsletters  
Parent letters  
Interactive Posters  
Book Comprehension  
Jigsaw Activities  
Frequently Visited Websites  
Assessments  
Directions  
Kids can talk on code  
about their art work, book  
reports  
Speak Foreign Language

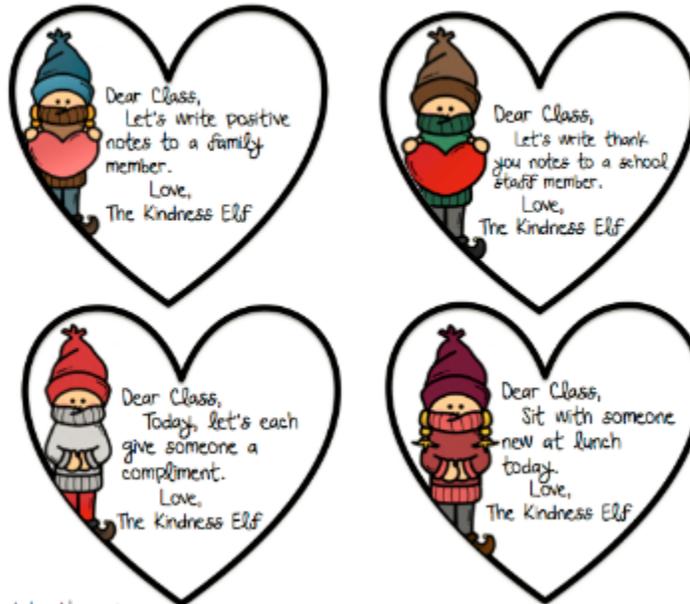
## Bitmoji



- If you are reading/grading student assignments in **Google Drive**, now you can add what I call the "new sticker" to their digital work...a Bitmoji! Kids/Teens will LOVE finding a little cartoon character that resembles their teacher on their work.

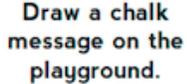
# Celebrate Kindness

As an alternative to the Elf on the Shelf, use these free reproducible "Kindness Elves" from Erica Bohrer's blog. Or, try tootling - the opposite of tattling! Tootling is when students write a positive note about their classmates or teacher and stick it up on the tootling board.



[www.ericabohrer.blogspot.com](http://www.ericabohrer.blogspot.com)

## countdown to winter break RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS CALENDAR

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
 28 Draw a picture for a friend.	29  Pick up trash around school.	30 Give a compliment to someone.	1  Leave a friendly note in a library book.	2  Give high fives to your classmates.
5  Bring in a can of food for donation.	6 Write a thank you note to the school janitor.	7  Hold the door for someone.	8  Let someone else go first in line.	9  Draw a chalk message on the playground.
12  Share a family tradition with your class.	13  Collect coins for a cause that matters to you.	14 Write a poem for someone at your school.	15 Spend 10 minutes cleaning your classroom.	16  Make a card for a sick person.
19  Help someone do a job or chore.	20  Write a letter to a faraway friend.	21 Tell your teacher why he or she does a good job.	22  Set a personal goal for 2017.	23 Set a class goal for 2017.
26 <b>Hooray!</b>	27 <b>It's</b>	28 <b>winter</b>	29 <b>break</b>	30 <b>!!!</b>

# Registration

## Why Join?

- ⊙ Support middle level education throughout the state of Florida
- ⊙ Have access to great resources and professional development
- ⊙ Attend state and regional conferences
- ⊙ Join now to have your membership extended through June

### FLORIDA LEAGUE OF MIDDLE SCHOOLS

#### Membership Registration Form, Yearly from July 1 - June 30

Membership Type

\_\_\_\_\_ Individual     \$25.00

Institutional/School Membership

\_\_\_\_\_ Institutional/School     \$150.00

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

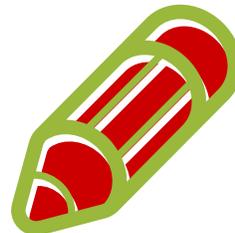
City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

County: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Please mail to: **Florida League of Middle Schools**

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1409 San Rafael Court  
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Do you have a story to share? We would love to have your input! Contact Terri Golden at [tgoldenhart@yahoo.com](mailto:tgoldenhart@yahoo.com) to submit an article for publication.