



# The Exclamation Point!

From the founder of National Punctuation Day®  
and Punctuation Playtime®

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## ON THE ROAD TEACHING PUNCTUATION

### What has happened to our language skills?

By Jeff Rubin

I was thinking the other day that it was time I sent another newsletter, and when I looked up I realized it has been nearly two years since my last one.

Omigod! It's been a busy two years. In the fall of 2006, my wife, Norma, and I developed and began performing *Punctuation Playtime®*, a

program for elementary schools that teaches punctuation to children in grades 1-6. ([www.PunctuationPlaytime.com](http://www.PunctuationPlaytime.com)).

This was a natural progression from the holiday I founded in 2004 — *National Punctuation Day®* ([www.NationalPunctuationDay.com](http://www.NationalPunctuationDay.com)) — which will be celebrated for the fifth time on September 24, 2008!

In the last two years Norma and I have performed 56 *Punctuation Playtime®* programs in schools in northern and southern California, and as far east as Chicago.



**Jeff and Norma in the Forbidden City, Beijing, PRC.**

We have promoted the program at education conferences and vendor fairs in Chicago, St. Louis, Orlando, Nashville, Seattle, Denver, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Long Beach, Sacramento, Rancho Cucamonga, San Lorenzo, San Jose and San Diego — National School Boards Association, National Association of

Elementary School Principals, National PTA, California PTA, PTO, California School Boards Association, Centre East Showcase, Premiere Showcase, and others.

We even introduced *National Punctuation Day®* to a group of young Chinese students at the Forbidden City in Beijing, where we were vacationing!

As you know, language skills are a primary concern not only of teachers at all levels, but also of business

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**“Your program completely supports our curriculum content. You have wrapped up the best in teaching to bring to our students. I love the fact that you are not afraid to teach young children great skills!”**

**— SALLY FELDMAN, WASHINGTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, POINT RICHMOND, CA —**

## WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO OUR LANGUAGE SKILLS?

### > **From front page**

leaders who decry that students graduating from American colleges do not have the reading and writing skills necessary for job advancement and success.

Here's a news item that might interest you:

*The Texas State School Board, in a 9-6 vote, passed a comprehensive set of new English standards for all grade levels in Texas schools, adopting back-to-the-basics education guidelines for teaching our national language.*

Grammar. Spelling. Punctuation. What has happened to the English language in the United States?

As reported in the *Wichita Falls Times Record News* (Ann Work, June 15, 2008), “a local valedictorian explains — ungrammatically — that ‘me and my friend’ will take a trip this summer.

“A Wichita Falls school district administrator sends an e-mail, explaining that he is ‘sighting’ number trends — not ‘citing.’

“A teacher writes about a student, saying she believes he will go ‘strait’ to college after graduation.”

Businesses, reported Work, are spending \$3 billion annually to train their employees in reading and writing skills.

According to The Report of the Commission for a College-Ready Texas, 50 percent of Texas's college freshmen must enroll in remedial classes.

Nationwide, it's become a Texas-size problem.

Nearly half of the incoming freshmen in the California State University system score below proficient in English on placement tests that determine what level of courses student should take.

In the country's largest state community college system, more

than 300,000 students ended up in remedial classes during the 2006 school year.

### **How we help young students**

**L**earning is easier when children are having fun, and they have a lot of fun with *Punctuation Playtime*®.

We facilitate a 45-minute program of non-stop activities, games, and punctuation learning. *Punctuation Playtime*® takes a subject that children might roll their eyes at and makes it an engaging, enjoyable, and memorable learning experience.

We believe that reaching children at the beginning of their scholastic careers is critical in helping them develop the reading and writings skills that will be a key not only to their academic success, but also to their professional success as adults.

The children will remember the lessons they learned in this program for a lifetime!

***Punctuation Playtime*® meets Language Arts state standards.**

**We are now taking bookings for fall 2008 and spring 2009 programs. Call our toll-free number (877) 588-1212**

Nationwide, 28 percent of incoming freshmen enrolled in remedial college classes, according to a 2004 report by the National Center for Education Statistics.

In Texas, parents can look forward to seeing their children learn more grammar, phonics, punctuation, spelling, vocabulary, handwriting, and basic writing skills.

The board's decision reflects a growing concern that public schools are graduating generations of children who are not only unfit for college, but also for the workplace. Statistics seem to confirm this.

Whole Language, an English course of study that stressed creative writing skills but skimmed on teaching grammar, spelling, and punctuation — it was felt these skills would be acquired in the writing process — wasn't working. A 2007 study by ACT, a college entrance exam company, found that only 19 percent of Texas high school graduates were college ready in English and other subjects.

A national survey of high school and college instructors by ACT revealed that what students learn in high school and what they need to know for college does not always match up.

“What college teachers say is they want students with a firm grasp of the basics,” said Cynthia Schmeiser, president and chief operating officer of the education division at ACT.

The results of the survey might help explain why community colleges and universities send so many freshmen to remedial classes.

Read the complete article about the Texas State School Board's decision at [www.timesrecord-news.com/news/2008/jun/15/readiness-question/](http://www.timesrecord-news.com/news/2008/jun/15/readiness-question/)

# WHAT TEACHERS SAY ABOUT Punctuation Playtime®

**"I was very impressed with the program and the interaction both you and Norma created with the kids. The kids were on track and obviously engaged. I was also impressed that they seemed to be remembering what you were saying. I loved the Wynken, Blynken, and Nod piece."**

**"I think it is a well-done program. I hope I will be able to collect enough funding to make this program a regular event."**

SUSAN WITTENBERG, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, WEST CONTRA COSTA PUBLIC EDUCATION FUND, SAN PABLO, CA



**"I liked the games, the story, and the student participation. The song is great, too."**

**"We learned punctuation marks by playing games and singing. It was great!"**

— Julie LeMoine, Tara Hills School, Pinole, CA

**"I liked the introduction, practice, and review. Good job. The children wanted to do more. They cheered for punctuation!"**

— Trudy Jensen, Ellerhorst School, Pinole, CA

**"I liked the games, singing, and comments from the students. The program was well-managed. I liked the mellow presentation with memorable activities. The review of punctuation marks and their use in a movement activity was most valuable for our students. They need to move!"**

— Mrs. DeCarlo, Tara Hills School, Pinole, CA

**"There were so many visuals — they made a dry subject more interesting. There was great (student) involvement with the relay, rap song and pin the punctuation mark. It was a great review, especially making the distinction between brackets and parentheses and a hyphen and a dash. I think a lot of teachers don't know!"**

— Mrs. Jenness, Tolenas Elementary School, Fairfield, CA

**"The children were very engaged. They loved the games. I appreciated the help you gave to those who needed it."**

— Mrs. Anderson, Murphy School, El Sobrante, CA



**"The program increased the students' interest in punctuation. It gave me a springboard to make up some more punctuation games to play in the classroom."** — Mrs. Benzie, Murphy School, El Sobrante, CA

**"I liked the interactivity with the children. We focus on the basics — period, comma, etc. It's nice to know that now they can do ellipsis, semicolon, etc. I now feel all my students in the first grade can use all the punctuation marks you taught today."** — Cecilia Moulton, Valley View Elementary School, Richmond, CA

**"The program has great activities. They were more fun than reading (about punctuation) from a book. The students were engaged. It was a perfect time to review for the STAR."**

— Rose Cassali, Santa Susana Elementary School, Simi Valley, CA

# Two ways to get Punctuation Playtime®



***Pin the Punctuation Mark on the Sentence is one of the most popular Punctuation Playtime® activities. Others include the Punctuation Relay and the teacher-led singing of the Punctuation Rap®.***

# 1

## **Book us for programs**

We love working with young students. Please call us about coming to your school.

Call us toll-free at **(877) 588-1212**, or e-mail Jeff at [Jeff@PunctuationPlaytime.com](mailto:Jeff@PunctuationPlaytime.com).

# 2

## **Purchase our instructional DVD**

We also offer the program to schools and libraries as a training DVD. It takes teachers and facilitators step by step through our activities and learning objectives so they can replicate the program in their classrooms and assemblies.

The DVD can be shared for cooperative teaching. Several grades in one school can learn important writing and literacy skills. Teachers and facilitators can reinforce and support each other.

It's a great value!

### **With either option, you'll receive a CD with:**

- a Teachers' Activity Kit (12 punctuation activities for the classroom)
- a Kids' Activity Kit (23 punctuation activities to be done individually and with parents)
- a set of four, 4-color punctuation posters for the teacher to hang in his/her classroom
- the Punctuation Rap® music and lyrics
- the words to Wynken, Blynken, and Nod
- the sentences for Pin the Punctuation Mark on the Sentence.

## **Order the DVD/CD package for only \$299**

Order online at [www.PunctuationPlaytime.com](http://www.PunctuationPlaytime.com)

We accept Visa, MasterCard, American Express, and Discover credit cards.

If you prefer paying by check, make it payable to "Punctuation Playtime" and mail it to:

**Punctuation Playtime, 1517 Buckeye Court, Pinole, CA 94564**

Price includes shipping in the United States. To Canada or Mexico add \$5; to other countries add \$10.

## **Workshop for teachers**

### **Punctuation Playtime® for Teachers**

**A Playful Period for  
Creative Punctuation Practice!**

**— Call us for details —**

Through small-group and interactive activities, participants in this 90-minute workshop will reinvigorate their personal teaching styles with some proven ways that Punctuation Playtime® facilitators have created for classroom use.

#### **Workshop objectives:**

- Present an overview of 13 punctuation marks and how to use them correctly
- Brainstorm ways to creatively introduce and/or review punctuation with elementary school students
- Identify available teacher resources to increase proficiency with punctuation.