

Mastermind Endorsement

This note is written to express my enthusiasm and support of the Mastermind Program as conceived and operationalized by Mindy DeGraff. This program has been a part of my 4th grade classroom here at Sechrist School for the past three months. This program has built upon the skills my students need in both academic and social settings. Designed to give students problem solving confidence, it does so much more!

One of the most predominant skills my students have learned is "listening." This skill has been critical as they listen to the introduction by Master Mindy. But more importantly this skill has been essential when they listen to each other in generating ideas to solve a problem. The atmosphere of focused enthusiasm, negotiating for individual ideas, sharing materials, and compromising for cherished roles when the "contest" begins is priceless. My students have improved dramatically in these listening skill aspects.

In my class we have some behaviorally-challenged students this year. The high level of impulsivity, insensitivity, and disturbed reactions was definitely a distracting factor during regular classtime, and I anticipated it to be a challenge as well during Mastermind. As the program is designed for student-centered exploration and decision-making, I knew that I needed to keep a distance and let it unfold. What wonderful results have come! I have seen my students show a level of patience and consideration toward "unpopular" ideas and "unlikable" classmates; I have watched a student who is fully engaged in the building process, lighten up as the results don't come to fruition; I have seen some tears that two weeks later have disappeared because that person's classmates really do care, and really do listen! My students have grown exponentially in interpersonal skills.

As a long time teacher with the Flagstaff Public Schools and other regional public and private schools, I full encourage the adoption of Mastermind into the curriculum. It is effective and clearly has objectives that meet Arizona State Standards.

Sue Wright, M.A.
4th Grade, Sechrist Elementary
November 28, 2006