

December 10, 2006

To Whom It May Concern:

My third grade class at Knoles School has been participating in Mindy Degraff's Mastermind program for the past 14 weeks. She has presented the program weekly for 1 full hour each time. My students are completely hooked! Every Thursday I hear the same mantra, "Is Master Mindy coming today?" "Yippee!"

Mastermind coincides with my philosophy of teaching children to "think outside the box", a necessary skill for the real world. This program allows the children to interact creatively using a variety of problem solving methods in a teamwork environment. Ms. Degraff has guided the students to approach problems with a step by step SOLVE method. The personalities and conflicts among the different teams are handled in a way that the students end up compromising in a give and take situation that ultimately works itself out. A special Mastermind lesson was developed to help the students understand each others' moods and personalities. This seemed to help the consistent conflicts a few students had.

Her teaching techniques are very professional and the problems presented are geared to the students' interests and ability level. All students in my class are involved including a mild mentally disabled student. I have observed "shining stars" in creativity and thought processes which often turn out to be the students who struggle in academics.

The students are scored on teamwork, creativity, and the actual solving of the problem. When Ms. Degraff asks the individual teams how well did they worked together they are honest and sincere about their reflections. The end of the session is wrapped up with a "mind winder" which requires the students to think of a creative answer to a common question. I now hear the students often commenting in our language arts lessons, "That was a common/creative answer."

I have had many parents attend these sessions and they are very impressed at how their child blossoms and opens up during the projects. I feel very fortunate to be able to continue Mastermind this next trimester and hopefully will be able to fund it through out the remained of the school year.

Sincerely,
Jaima Peterson
Knoles School