



*The mission of GISD is to ensure that every student achieves maximum potential.*

# GISD Curriculum News

**rigor/engagement/higher-order thinking**

From the Desk of Keri Thoele,  
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## **The Importance of the SAFE Classroom**

Risk-taking is a vital part of learning. Students have to know that they won't be ridiculed or humiliated for making a mistake or having the wrong answer.

Children are naturally curious, but in an unsafe environment, fear inhibits a student's ability to explore and create, which ultimately interferes with learning. A safe environment is created when the teacher validates and values each student and his or her contribution to the class.

The greatest  
mistake you can  
make in life is  
continually fearing  
you will make one.  
– Elbert Hubbard

**Strategy  
of the Week:**

Hold-Ups

True False

## Hold-Ups

**Concept:** Students are given a set of hold-up cards (your imagination is the limit) so that when questions are asked, they can all give their input, and the teacher can easily and quickly gauge understanding.

**Procedures:** 1. Provide students with hold-ups (a set of cards with a variety of answers on them, such as true or false; A, B, C or D; or numbers (for younger students). If answers will greatly vary, you can provide the student with a mini-whiteboard and dry erase marker. 2. As the teacher asks questions, students register their answers by holding up the card they think is correct or writing the answer on the dry erase board. 3. The teacher swiftly gauges the responses and adjusts instruction accordingly.

It is very important to maintain a “safe” classroom so that students feel comfortable in responding. This activity will not work if the teacher or other students single out students who answer incorrectly. (Teachers should follow up after class or in tutorials with students who consistently are wrong. These students likely need individual attention.)

**HINT:** Inexpensive “whiteboards” can be made by simply laminating a small piece of poster board or construction paper. On the other end of the spectrum, if the technology is available, clickers may be used to accomplish the same task. Number cards work well for math classrooms, for questions such as “Which is a prime number?” or “What is the greatest common factor?”

Sample hold-up to use when discussing the branches of government:



**JUST A FEW**  
**VARIATIONS:**  
**NUMBER CARDS**  
**SELECTED RESPONSE**  
**TRUE/NOT TRUE**  
**MULTIPLE CHOICE**  
**WHITEBOARDS**

## The Safe Classroom

**To validate a student's incorrect response or attempt, you can often help students come to alternate conclusions with some simple statements:**

- *I see where you're going with that, but is that always true?*
- *Tell me more.*

**Wrong answers are a part of the journey of learning!**  
**(Himmele & Himmele 2011)**