

TCARE

Teachers Connecting to Advance Retention and Empowerment

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CTL@CSUN IS THE RESEARCH AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT HUB OF THE MICHAEL D. EISNER COLLEGE OF EDUCATION.

Founded in 2002 through the Eisner Foundation, our mission is to identify, research, and disseminate what really works in education.



Welcome to 2016! (How weird is that?)

If you read our first TCARE volume, you know that this newsletter was started as a way to assist teachers who might be experiencing burn-out or feeling like their teaching toolkits were getting low. We offer short, practical articles on what works in different areas, as well as a focus on self-care. Our authors are professors, teachers, counselors, and other practitioners. We hope you will share this newsletter with friends and other educators who may need a quick pick-me-up.

Did you know that research on new teachers has identified specific phases that teachers move through? Though not everyone moves through these in the exact same sequence or timeframe, most teachers experience anticipation, survival, disillusionment, rejuvenation, reflection...and back to anticipation (Moir, 2011). Where are you right now in those phases? Moir, an expert on teacher retention and mentoring, leads us to believe that many of you are probably just starting into the rejuvenation phase. She writes, "The rejuvenation phase is characterized by a slow rise in the new teacher's attitude toward teaching. It generally begins in January. Having a winter break makes a tremendous difference for new teachers. It allows them to resume a more normal lifestyle, with plenty of rest, food, exercise, and time for family and friends....This breath of fresh air gives novice teachers a broader perspective with renewed hope" (p. 2). Did you take a break over the holiday? Did you breathe, connect with friends, and eat a bunch of chocolate (my personal method of relaxation)? I hope so. If not, it's not too late! Take a break this weekend and enjoy yourself.

If you are starting to feel tired, disillusioned, or burnt-out...remember why you are there. You make a difference. You are changing lives. You are needed. And yes, you are also tired. But if you remember your focus (I'm hoping it's the students and your passion for teaching), and if you begin to engage in self-care (like taking a break to eat and allowing yourself to have fun on the weekends), you can begin to move to the rejuvenation and reflection phase. We're here to help you do that!

Moir, E. (2011, August 11). Phases of first-year teaching [web log]. Retrieved from <http://www.newteachercenter.org/blog/phases-first-year-teaching>

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Wendy W. Murawski".

Wendy W. Murawski, Ph.D.
Executive Director and Eisner Endowed Chair
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WHAT REALLY WORKS

FULL STEAM AHEAD!

When was the last time your students were truly excited about learning? When their motivation and interest was so palpable that you were reminded why you chose teaching as a profession? Now what if I asked you when was the last time your students felt this way about math, science, or (gasp!) engineering? We hear this buzz word everywhere: STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math). Add the arts (and you should) and it becomes STEAM. How does one start to implement STEAM in the classroom?

BEGIN lessons by identifying students' misconceptions. One of my favorite, and most successful ways of beginning STEAM lessons, is to poll the class about what they already know about a topic. Many teachers use a K-W-L chart asking students what they *know*, *want* to know, and what they have *learned*. In STEAM disciplines, what students believe prior to instruction is frequently incorrect. I suggest, however, using their misconceptions to drive the lesson. Have the students assume what they think is true. Then present them with text, data, and other tools, and ask them to revisit their conceptions. With the given tools, can they support their personal perceptions with evidence? Do they have to change them? With this lesson structure, the “light bulb” moments within your class will be visible from the moon.

EMBRACE project-based learning. Kids learn best by doing. Let your students do more than read a textbook and listen to you talk. It doesn't matter if you teach Pre-K or twelfth grade—kids need to *do*! Project-based learning (PBL) or problem-based learning uses collaborative groups that challenge students to use cross-curricular skills. PBL encourages students to work together to solve problems posed by the teacher. It may

be a design challenge or other problem that can only be solved by applying content knowledge using a hands-on approach. PBL can not only help your students remember information, but it encourages a deeper level of thinking by inspiring students to find the answers to questions for themselves. More information can be found at <http://www.pbl.uci.edu/whatispbl.html>

TEACH engineering! Don't let the e-word scare you! The engineering design process provides students with a systematic approach to solving problems. Use the engineering design approach to help your students ask, imagine, plan, create, and improve their designs. The design process provides explicit problem-solving steps that give even the most creative kids the constraints that breed creative thinking. Using the engineering process allows students a practical place to use math and science skills to create solutions and solve problems within authentic situations. Resources like *Engineering Is Elementary* and *Teachengineering.com* offer students systematic instruction in predesigned lessons and activities. Go online and get many of the *Engineering Is Elementary* or NASA design process templates that are available.

STEAM may be a buzz word, but it is here to stay. Implementing STEAM as interdependent disciplines helps your students make connections they will need to be part of the exciting and innovative world to come! If you want more tips on how to implement STEAM in your classroom, check out *What Really Works in Science in the Elementary Classroom!* (Rood, 2015)

Rood, E. (2015). Stellar STE(A)M strategies. In W. Murawski & K. L. Scott (Eds.), *What really works in elementary education* (pp. 72-86). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.



Erica Rood currently teaches 3rd grade at CHIME Charter School in Woodland Hills, California. An eight-year veteran elementary teacher, Ms. Rood is a national finalist for the Presidential Awards for Math and Science Teaching.

WHAT REALLY WORKS

6 STEPS TO VOCABULARY SUCCESS

Vocabulary acquisition in my class is more effective than ever this year, thanks to the principles of *Bringing Words to Life: Robust Vocabulary Instruction*. Here is my vocabulary instruction routine (based on Beck, McKeown, & Kucan's [2013] best practices) broken down into six practical steps.

Step 1: Choosing the Right Words to Teach

www.TextProject.org provides a list of 4,000 Simple Word Families that make up 90% of all texts! When I choose vocabulary words to teach, I cross-reference words from our class texts with this high frequency word list to ensure that I am choosing vocabulary my students will encounter regularly.

Step 2: Have Students Rate Their Word Knowledge

When I introduce vocabulary, I give students a word knowledge chart and have them hold up the number of fingers that represent their knowledge:

1. I don't know it. I've never heard it.
2. I've heard it, but I don't know what it means.
3. I can use it in a sentence.
4. I can teach it to the class.

I acknowledge responses and say, "I see we have a lot of different levels of knowledge, but let's get everyone to a 4!" You can also ask them to rate their knowledge several days before instruction to help you select vocabulary. Rating knowledge is similar to accessing prior knowledge before reading, and it helps students understand that "knowing" a word is a continuum.

Step 3: Provide a Student-Friendly Definition

In order to provide a student friendly definition, I consult several sources: www.ldoceonline.com, <http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english-cobuild-learners>, and <http://onelook.com>. The first two dictionaries provide simplified definitions, and the third is a consensus dictionary.

Step 4: Provide Different Contexts

A valuable way to decide which contexts you will provide is to see how the vocabulary word frequently collocates, or goes with other words. To find this information, I use the *Frequency List* on www.WordandPhrase.info. When I taught the word, I had students use the phrase "resist the temptation." Another popular collocate for this word was "arrest" to "resist arrest,"

so we also did an activity that incorporated that use.

Step 5: Have Students Interact with the Word

This is your opportunity to reach all learning modalities. Vocabulary activities should be a combination, or alternation, of visual, auditory, oral, kinesthetic, and tactile activities. On the first day, I prefer to do oral activities that encourage students to use the word in speech. For example, after I provide the context from our story, for the word "resist," I show students a picture of a mouse turned away from a piece of cheese in a trap. I provided this frame:

The _____ is resisting the temptation to _____.

We read the frame one time chorally, and then I ask some questions: What is this a picture of? What is the mouse stopping himself from doing? When I think the students are ready, I have several different volunteers describe the picture using the sentence frame. I provide 2-3 more pictures: someone resisting the temptation to eat chocolate, watch television, stay up late, etc. I call on different students and sometimes have them share with partners. The next step is to have them come up with their own examples and make connections to their lives. We brainstorm a class list of things we've resisted. I leave the list up and provide a frame for them: I have **resisted the temptation** to _____. They can then look at the list and choose something that's true for them.

Step 6: Review, Review, Review

Vocabulary words need constant reinforcement. Review is built in daily at the beginning of vocabulary instruction and in our closing activities. Over school breaks, students can choose to be apart of www.Remind.com, where I message vocabulary questions and reminders.

In closing, remember, "knowing" a word is a multi-faceted concept. We do not just want our students to be able to recite a definition; ultimately, we want students to be able to read, write, speak, and think with this new word, and that requires a new kind of instruction: *Robust Vocabulary Instruction*.

Beck, I. L., McKeown, M. G., & Kucan, L. (2013). *Bringing words to life* (2nd ed). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

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ADMIN CORNER

LIFE OVER THE RAINBOW

"Someday I'll wish upon a star, and wake up where the clouds are far behind me. Where troubles melt like lemon drops, a way upon the chimney tops. That's where you'll find me."

—Dorothy Gale

Dorothy's quest for the *Land of Oz* was both magical and terrifying. Your journey from apprentice to seasoned classroom teacher is comparable to that of our beloved Dorothy's. From the turbulent tornado to the clicking of her heels, Dorothy encounters magical moments and experiences terrifying trials.

On your journey, you will experience moments of magic and opportunities for pause. During these interludes of transformation, Dorothy's familiar words, *"Toto, I've got a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore,"* may come to mind. It is how you are prepared to respond that will keep you on the pathway to sustaining life over the rainbow and finding fulfillment in your chosen career.

Ten suggestions for achieving your goals and surviving the journey:

The Students:

- ♦ Just as Dorothy developed a very strong and unique bond with the Scarecrow, Tin Man, and Cowardly Lion; seek to understand and build rapport with students. Learn their likes, dislikes, hopes, and dreams.
- ♦ Embrace the power of positive interactions. When Dorothy met Glenda the Good Witch, she could have never foreseen the impact of this "chance" encounter.
- ♦ Do not forget Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Your students' basic needs will always supersede their educational needs. Do not forget that the Scarecrow and Tin Man needed straw and oil well before they were available to pursue a brain and a heart.
- ♦ Take time to experience the students' community. Dorothy reminds us that no matter how far away we travel, *"There's no place like home...there's no place like home..."* Meeting the students where they are, will allow you to guide them to where they need to be.

- ♦ Like Dorothy, you coach your students for their life's journey; survive the rotten apples, plough through the poppy fields, grab the infamous broom, and deliver the students ready for the next challenge. When you doubt yourself, recall the illustrious words of the great and powerful Wizard of OZ, *"Frightened? Child, you're talking to a man who's laughed in the face of death, sneered at doom, and chuckled at catastrophe... I was petrified."*

The Staff:

- ♦ A school's culture is multi-dimensional; like the witch's castle, study it from the rocks before daring to enter. As the Scarecrow reminds us, *"some people without brains do an awful lot of talking..."* Don't always believe what you hear.
- ♦ Become acquainted with the office staff, the cafeteria workers, and the school service workers. Dorothy would have never found her way to the Yellow Brick Road without The Lollipop Guild, The Lullaby League, or the Mayor of Munchkinland.
- ♦ Dorothy needed the support and guidance from many to achieve her goals. As an educator, take advantage of opportunities to collaborate with other educators. Recognize that sharing your expertise will decrease the time you spend staring into your crystal ball.
- ♦ Avoid the Wicked Witch of the West types; they will only attempt to dim the shine on your ruby slippers. *"Just try and stay out of my way. Just try! I'll get you, my pretty, and your little dog, too!"* Stay far, far, away from the naysayers and they will eventually melt away.
- ♦ Keep an open mind; embrace the Cowardly Lions, Tin Men and Scarecrows on staff. They will render your journey memorable. They will be there the night before your formal observation, allow you to vent after a challenging day, and remind you why you chose to enter this noble profession.

"Somewhere over the rainbow, skies are blue, and the dreams that you dare to dream really do come true." —Dorothy Gale



Michele Murphy, M.Ed., is a specialist in the Office of Special Education in Baltimore County Public Schools. She is an adjunct professor at Loyola University and Goucher College in Baltimore, Maryland. Michele has been in the field of education for 33 years. We can't all be Glenda, but we can each share a little glitter wherever we go.

T-CARE

TIPS FROM A TOY (TEACHER OF THE YEAR)

RELATIONSHIPS MATTER!

I do not remember how I learned to read, but I know how I felt every time I walked into Mrs. Feeney's 7th grade reading class. I mattered to her, and I worked hard not to let her down. Relationships matter. Students who have positive interpersonal relationships with teachers are more engaged in and excited about learning. Once kids are invested in school, they take ownership over their learning. Improvement in relationships equates to higher student confidence and achievement. Certainly, effective teaching strategies enhance learning, but it is the power of connection that generates the most powerful influence on students.

Remind yourself everyday that you teach kids, not just content. To ensure students are fully engaged, meaningful relationships must be built first. KNOW your students. KNOW their families. KNOW where they go after school. KNOW the environment in which they live. KNOW the potential struggles they face. KNOW the roadblocks to completing work and concentrating in class. Every child has a story. Deeply understanding that story requires work! That may seem overwhelming when you are an already-overworked teacher, but it is worth it. Here are some ways to learn the story behind the child, without losing your sanity or requiring all of your own personal time:

Start a two-way journal. Urge students to write about their feelings and daily happenings in a dialogue journal. Students return the journal to you so you can read and respond to their thoughts. This is a non-threatening way to gain insight and interact with students. Don't worry if you can't respond every day; even sporadic feedback is powerful for a student. Secondary teachers might even rotate journals so that each period does their journal on a different day, so that you are only reading one class's journal each night and can really reflect and respond.

Allow talk time. Provide opportunities for students to share ANYTHING. Often times they are begging to be heard by a trusting adult. Have a specific time in the day or week when students are allowed to share. Worried that it will take over the class? Don't let it. Set the timer and help facilitate the sharing. Also, consider having a fishbowl with pieces of paper available so students can write what they are feeling or want to share anonymously; you can pick out a few and limit the time to what is available. Just remember to also read all of the papers yourself at some point so you know what feelings are going on in your class.

Interview your students. Who do they live with? What kind and how much interaction do they have with their parents? What are their interests outside of school? What are their responsibilities outside of school? Again, use ways that are "doable" and don't drain your own time but allow you to learn more about your students. For example, elementary teachers could assign a peer interview, where students interview each other and then share what they learned. Secondary teachers could incorporate this type of learning activity into a writing or speaking assignment; using technology will not only build motivation and engagement, but will also reinforce skills in word processing, PowerPoint, or another type of technological application.

Talk. And talk often. With them, not at them. Just as I remember Mrs. Feeney and the connection I had with her, so too will your students remember the teachers who connect with them. Find those students who are quiet, off to the side, or even those who have the most behavior problems, and learn what makes them tick. Make positive personal comments to them about their baseball card collection, favorite TV show, or music preferences. Reduce in-class lecturing and increase in-class conversations, debates, and discussions.

Be forgiving. Everyone has an off day. Dig into why the day is off. Often times it's a simple answer like...the student is hungry, a favorite pet is sick, or the bus was late. Sometimes you'll learn information that will make you amazed that the student is doing as well as he or she is and you'll realize how resilient kids really are. Think about your bad days and how you would have liked someone to give you a break. Now do it for one student, or three, or thirteen. It won't take any more time and it will come back to you multi-fold.

You will connect with a child's mind after you've connected with their heart. Find ways to build trust and the academics will follow. Every child has a story worth telling. Are you brave enough to learn it?

Amy Laughlin is a 2015 California Teacher of the Year. She has taught for 16 years, including running an intervention program at her former school site in Orange County. She is now a first-year principal at an elementary school in Los Alamitos, California.



THE CARING CONNECTION

MINDFULNESS – SELF-CARE FOR BUSY TEACHERS

Most teachers are constantly in motion: getting up early to get to work by 7:00; buzzing through a non-stop day, and coming home to a stack of papers to grade. Adding self-care activities such as yoga, exercise, or an early bedtime is not always easy or practical. Nonetheless, effective stress management is essential to prevent burnout and to keep the “spark” alive in the classroom. One of the most efficient and effective forms of stress management is mindfulness meditation. Mindfulness has recently taken center stage in the mental health and wellness communities because of the rapidly expanding evidence base that supports basic mindfulness as one of the most effective means for managing stress. Its popularity also is due to its efficiency: With five minutes a day of regular practice, you can measurably change your stress levels and even how your brain functions.

Mindfulness practice has three basic components: a) intentional present moment awareness, b) non-judgment, and c) compassion. The most common mindfulness practice is mindfulness awareness of the breath or mindfulness breath meditation, which involves the practitioner intentionally focusing on the breath while quieting thoughts that arise. When the practitioner is distracted by a thought, an itch, a noise, a feeling, etc., then the task is to notice that one is distracted and then return to watching oneself breathe without judging oneself and with compassion for the self. In a five-minute meditation, the typical new practitioner will lose focus and refocus dozens of times. When done on a regular basis, this practice of intentionally quieting the mind and refocusing increases a person’s ability to consciously shut off the stress response in daily life. The more you practice, the better you become at turning off the stress response at will. Most report a significant difference in their stress levels after two to three weeks of practicing five minutes a day five days per week.

Getting Started:

1. Identify an activity you regularly do five days a week that would be a good time to practice mindfulness; most people have greater success earlier in the day. Examples include before/after shower; upon arriving at work, upon waking, before opening email, etc. Put this in your calendar with a reminder alert!
2. Use the timer on your phone or download a mindfulness timer, such as Insight Timer, to time your practice. Set the timer for two minutes to begin and work up to five or more minutes.
3. Sit in a comfortable position and focus on your breath wherever you feel it the most, perhaps in the rising and falling of the belly or the sensation of air in and out of the nostrils.
4. Try to quiet your thoughts as they arise. When you find yourself distracted by a noise, worrying about tomorrow, feeling an itch, or berating yourself for a past action, just compassionately notice and then return your focus to the breath. Don’t judge yourself for having difficulty in focusing. It is difficult for most minds to stay quiet for more than five seconds.
5. Stop when the timer sounds.
6. Do it everyday, even if just for one minute. The greatest benefit comes from regular daily practice rather than longer infrequent practices.

Going Further:

To get the most out of your practice, it is best to take a structured group introductory course. UCLA has developed one of the leading mindfulness programs and offers classes throughout the LA area and online (www.marc.ucla.com). They also have free guided meditations on their website. The University of Massachusetts also has wonderful resources related to Jon Kabat Zinn’s Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program, the leading mindfulness program (www.umassmed.edu/cfm/stress-reduction). You can also find free mindfulness meditations on my website (www.dianegehart.com). Learning with a teacher may help you have a better understanding of how to practice and that will make it easier to maintain the practice for years to come.



Diane R. Gehart, Ph.D., LMFT, is a Professor in the Marriage and Family Therapy Program at California State University, Northridge. With 20 years in education, she is the author of *Mindfulness and Acceptance in Couple and Family Therapy*, *Mastering Competencies in Family Therapy*, and *Theory and Treatment Planning in Counseling and Psychotherapy*.

T-CARE

SELF CARE SPOTLIGHT

You're getting run down. You can't do it all. You are giving 110% and it's not enough. The idea of taking time out to visit with friends, go see a movie, or just chill for a night is crazy...you'd fall so much further behind! And yet....that's exactly what research tells us you need!!

It's not selfish, lazy, crazy, or a waste of time to take care of yourself. On the other hand, taking 20 minutes a day will actually help you provide balance, stay healthier (fewer sick days taken = fewer sub plans to prep), and reduce the chance of burnout. So, what can you do? Pick just a few of these "25 science-backed ways to change your life by taking better care of yourself" and make some changes. Go to www.greatist.com to get more details and the actual research behind each one of these items.

1: Get outside. 2: Try an outdoor workout. 3: Pay it forward by volunteering. 4: Breathe the right scents. 5: Stress less. 6: Be mindful. 7: Be happy. 8: Meditate. 9: Dance around. 10: Turn up the tunes. 11: Eat more fruits and veggies. 12: Swear it off. 13: Indulge in retail therapy. 14: Get it on. 15: Become a bookworm. 16: Laugh out loud. 17: Look at something cute. 18: Get enough zzz's. 19: Declutter. 20: Pound the pavement. 21: Indulge in a massage. 22: Cuddle. 23: Get your Om on. 24: Unplug. 25: Get out of town.

Don't feel guilty about doing any of these – you are doing it to help more students in the long run!

Duron, A. (2015). 25 science-backed ways to change your life by taking better care of yourself. Retrieved from http://greatist.com/happiness/ways-to-practice-self-care?utm_source=email&utm_medium=forward&utm_campaign=ways-to-practice-self-care

Wendy Murawski, Ph.D., has been in education for 24 years. She's written and edited six books, is an international consultant, and runs the CTL at California State University, Northridge. However, to achieve balance, she spends as much time with her 11 year-old son as possible.... and hopes to have many more massages in 2016! For balance, of course.



Teacher Jokes: Laugh it up!

Teacher: 'Craig, you know you can't sleep in my class.'
Craig: 'I know. But maybe if you were just a little quieter, I could.'



Stressing the importance of a good vocabulary, the teacher told her HS students: "Use a word ten times, and it shall be yours for life." From somewhere in the back of the room, came a small male voice chanting, "Amanda, Amanda, Amanda, Amanda, Amanda, Amanda, Amanda, Amanda, Amanda, Amanda."



Pupil: "I don't think I deserved zero on this test!"
Teacher: "I agree, but that's the lowest mark I could give you!"

Spotlight on a Teacher App:

Kahoot! is a classroom student response system that is completely device agnostic. If students can access the internet, they can respond to all of the information provided via Kahoot. Using a simple drag and drop feature, instructors can create quizzes, discussion, or surveys—all of which can be embedded with images, text, video and more. Grades K-12.

Three Helpful Websites:

www.smithsonianeducation.org
www.educationworld.com
www.eie.org





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