

Rejuvenation in Education

Dr. David Kretschmer

As a product of the California educational system, a K-12 teacher for eight years, and a faculty member in the Michael D. Eisner College of Education for more than 20, I have witnessed significant shifts in the curriculum and theory that define educational practice. I learned to read through a programmed phonics approach but taught reading/language arts through whole-language and language experience. I recall learning about multiplication, division, fractions and the properties of triangles through lecture and daily in-class and homework exercises. The mathematics I learned had little to do with problem solving. Over the course of a 30 year career, a teacher is likely to bear witness to several major shifts in the prevailing educational theory guiding his/her practice. They reflect the efforts of the professional community to drill down into the central educational issues of the time. We continue to explore answers to such questions as: How do children learn? What is the knowledge base of the effective social studies teacher? How can teachers best meet the needs of English learners, students with special needs, including the gifted? What

are effective approaches to promoting an understanding of the nature of a discipline? How do we impart in students the knowledge, skills, and dispositions they will need to participate in the 21st Century?

A defining characteristic of any profession is that it continues to advance its own field. Shifts in educational practice are grounded in research and are representative of the evolution and continued rejuvenation of the educational process. As a teacher, you contribute to that rejuvenation in finding applications of that research in practice. New questions lead to new studies which lead to new and refined methods of teaching - rejuvenation.

State and national standards guide teachers in determining what to teach in their discipline, at their grade level. Much of teacher decision-making should be centered on how to teach that content to provide all students access to the curriculum. Your teacher certification program was designed to prepare you as a beginning teacher. Once in the classroom, you began a journey advancing your



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knowledge and skills towards mastery. Along your route, you will experience rejuvenation as a professional educator and hopefully contribute in significant ways to the ongoing rejuvenation of the profession. In addition to all of the wonderful daily strategies to stay rejuvenated that are suggested in this newsletter, I want you to consider the following:

Form a lesson study group at your school to study learning and teaching where it happens: in the classroom. View the lessons you teach as experiments (Hiebert, et al., 2003) and take a proactive approach to studying teaching and the effectiveness of lessons that

T-CARE

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you offer your students.

Network with other teachers, both those at your school, and others who share your professional interests. Join and participate in professional organizations that provide you an opportunity to take charge of your own professional development, your own journey.

Devote some time each week to

reading professional literature. These journals offer a range of topics that are of interest to teachers in the classroom, including ideas for units and lessons that align with national and state standards.

Enroll in a Master's degree program at your local university. Through these programs, teachers learn to further develop and refine their practices by reading and discussing leading research in

their field, learn research methodology and how to be reflective about their practice. They learn to make decisions about their practice based on evidence and their understanding of educational literature.

Hiebert, J., Morris, A.K., and Glass, B. (2003). Learning to learn to teach: An "experiment" model for teaching and teacher preparation in mathematics. *Journal of Mathematics Teacher Education*, 6, 201-222

Educational Therapy: On the Job Rejuvenation

By Marcy Dann



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The rejuvenation stage requires self-understanding in order to take stock of one's progress as a new teacher. Faced with a novel task, each of us hears an inner voice ranging from encouraging, "I know this is the first time, but I can do this," to critical, "I should have done this better." Knowing that internal thoughts impact learning is an integral skill that educational therapists are trained to address.

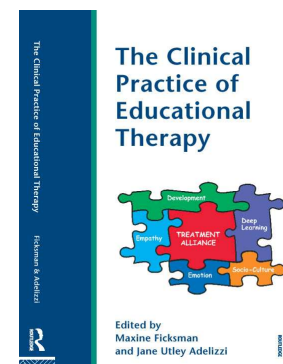
A professional educational therapist (ET) is trained to work with individual, school-aged students and adults who have learning difficulties. This is different than a teacher who works with students in groups, and is different from a psychotherapist who works with individual students who may not be able to contend with learning. Training focuses

on how to provide assessment, create and prioritize psycho-educational goals, and then develop an educational therapy treatment plan that may address specific academic skills or executive functioning.

The ET is also trained to recognize underlying social, emotional and cognitive issues that either support or challenge an individual's academic progress. The ET makes appropriate referrals to other types of therapists or allied professionals when a student is overwhelmed or unable to deal with the emotional repercussions of chronic academic stress. The educational therapy treatment plan works effectively because it regards the whole child within the contexts in which the student learns and lives. The treatment alliance between an ET and student builds over

time, requiring the ET to be cognizant of the qualities including, but not limited to, flexibility, familiarity with developmental stages, knowledge of best practices, and the ability to engage in self-reflection. Educational therapy leads a student to become a successful, autonomous learner, a result that strongly aligns with the theme of rejuvenation in this issue.

Reference: *The Clinical Practice of Educational Therapy*
Available through
www.aetonline.org





I am working really hard this year, my 2nd year teaching, and I'm trying to be positive in spite of all of the challenges -but each time I eat in the lunch room I overhear other teachers, and one "Negative Nelly" in particular, complaining and gossiping constantly. It is hard to be cheerful and positive in this environment. I've considered not eating in the lunchroom, but I know they would probably talk about me. What should I do?"

- "Not Nelly"

Dear Not Nelly,

We hear that you are concerned not only about how negative some teachers can be but also about the impact their negativity may have on you. This is a very important and valid issue you're raising. Thank you for raising it.

Your question draws attention to how hard it can be to feel like other members of our "team" are not helping us to use our rest times to regroup and prepare for the rest of our day. Those negative people may seem selfish and overbearing at times. To deal with that, you can choose to go off and be alone, but that leaves you without the support of co-workers and that isn't good. Also, it's good to make time to nurture these relationships. So, we prefer the option of staying and engaging somehow. But HOW?!

When people close to us are in pain, one way we can "insulate" ourselves from it is to remind ourselves that their negative attitudes or words are THEIRS, not OURS. This is the idea of having a clear "personal boundary"- I am me, and you are you. You can begin to do that before even entering the lunchroom or whatever space you expect to find the negative people. Before entering that space, take a moment and remind yourself of your own mood state and of your view of your work. If you are clear within yourself, you will be less impacted by other people's negative thoughts and moods.

Also, when you get yourself to this strengthened, self-assured inner state, it will help you to get in touch with what is happening for them. T-CARE is all about helping teachers to help teachers--because teaching is difficult!

So try to remember that their negative words and behaviors emerge out of their pain. Gossip, complaining and doomsday talk are all symptomatic of various sorts of inner suffering. The suffering may be related to such issues as a need for easy distraction from deeper pain, a need for "cheap" verbal stimulation, competitiveness that grows out of self-doubt, anger (also sometimes exhibited in sarcasm), or a desire to be the focus of attention (after all, these sorts of discussions can be riveting).

So, while listening to these negative conversations, try to maintain perspective and remain objective. If you can connect with your compassion for the struggle that drives their negativity, you will be more likely to avoid the pitfall of appearing to feel superior or righteous. Also, remember that when people vent about their negative feelings, they are not always wanting to know solutions. Sometimes they just need a person to be respectful and to hear them. The most helpful response is often just to acknowledge that their frustration, anger or other feelings are real and valid.



Dr. Corinne Barker and
Dr. Alan Goodwin
are Licensed Clinical
Psychologists and CTL Fellows.

Submit your questions for
The Doctors to: T-CARE@csun.edu

A Rejuvenated You - Be happy teaching the rest of the year!

Robin Mlynarik, Elementary Education, CSUN

After the New Year we had rain here in Southern California, followed by clear blue skies. It was almost like two fresh starts had occurred. One that brought forth resolutions and one that brought forth inspiration. These feelings of rejuvenation follow the phases that teachers experience this time of the school year. This is the time you can embrace those fresh perspectives with renewed attitudes, not only in your personal life- but in your classroom.

You now have a better understanding of all that teachings entails, you have developed some strategies, managed to navigate some challenges, and are ready to tackle the remainder of the year. But how can you step forward inspired and determined to be have a happy productive classroom the rest of the year and keep a clear, focused mind? Here is a practical Happy Rejuvenation Checklist you can use to start the new year right:

1. Relax- Yes, stay with the commitment you might have made to exercise more, but also try to stretch and do little things during your teaching day to relieve stress and revitalize your body. Consider walking during part of your lunch period. Recruit a walking buddy or group- start a healthy trend.

2. Change- You can revise or change any classroom procedures and rules that are not effective or not

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Be happy (con't)

(Continued from page 3)

working. Think through what is desired and could be more effective and simply explain to the students that you thought of a new way to be more effective and reduce confusion. Then, introduce, practice and implement the change.

3. Motivate- Tell the students that you are extremely proud of the progress they are making and that they are really ready for next year. (Tell those 3rd graders, "Ahh you're really thinking like a 4th grader now!" or "Oh! That is a 4th grade skill and you already know so much about it!") Set the bar in front of them and keep moving.

4. Borrow- New ideas can be valuable and fun. Ask around for clever unit ideas and work samples. Veteran teachers are happy to share their ideas and materials. Just ask in grade level meetings or in the lunch room. When you return the sample or unit folder, be sure you added a little something, an idea of your own, and return the favor of sharing.

5. Enjoy- Make the day happy and pleasant. Take 5 minutes to sing a song or tell a joke. Music calms the soul and lifts spirits. Humor can be in the form of an appropriate joke that is a play on words and increases vocabulary and understanding of idioms- but also brings a healthy dose of laughter.

6. Travel- You can travel with your students and their imaginations through books. Children of all ages love being read to. Read aloud, 10 to 15 minutes a day. Select a rich story, just above their independent reading level and let their

imaginations soar as you model a passion for reading.

7. Invite- You can always use an extra hand or pair of eyes in the classroom. Invite or re-invite parents to volunteer. They can help with simple cutting or assembly needs at home or they can assist you during the school day. Cutting and assembly tasks can be sent home and returned via a child. Just include directions, a sample, and a "need back" date. Consider a lunchtime "training or orientation session" to welcome parents or explain volunteer needs. If parents feel welcomed and comfortable with volunteering options they are thrilled to help. When parents are vested in their child's education- everyone benefits.

8. Share- As students struggle with skills, or get a little weary of working, go ahead and share a story or antidote about a learning struggle you had in school. Students will relate to you as a human and perhaps realize that they too can conquer a challenge.

9. Grow- The more you know, the more effectively you can teach. Attend local Education conferences or professional development workshops. Sources can be professional organizations, your school district, local college education classes, or even educational supply stores that offer mini idea workshops. If your time is limited then borrow a trade book from your principal, resource person, or local library and improve your skill set just from reading 10 minutes a day.

10. Celebrate- Keep a list of things to celebrate. Write down one thing each day that you did well and one moment

that brought a smile to your face. (You may even find that this list gets longer daily.) Then pat yourself on the back. Teaching is not easy and you need to remember that with all the challenges there are joys! Say, "Hooray! I'm a Teacher!"

11. Play- Well, play constructively. Motivate your children to be effective with all their procedures. Challenge them to move, transition, and organize themselves quickly and efficiently. Time them and "bank" extra minutes that they do not waste. At the end of the week or month they can have the time that they "banked" to complete puzzles, play on the computer, build models etc. They will quickly mature to realize how time is budgeted, and best used.

12. Capture- Bring your camera to school, or borrow one from a friend. Take pictures of those smiling

student faces working and learning. Create a bulletin board that captures the learning and joy in your classroom.

13. Breathe- And be proud. Know that you are a critical, valuable piece of every child's life. You can set the tone for a life-long love of learning. You can model, praise, and inspire our future.

Indeed, there have been, and will be, many ups and downs this year, but with a fresh approach, and an inspired attitude, you can enjoy teaching and make a difference for every child. A New Year and bright blue skies can be inspiring to everyone!

"Teaching is not easy and you need to remember that with all the challenges there are joys!"



PRINCIPAL'S CORNER

with Mary Melvin

This time of year is a magical time. The students have matured a bit over the winter break, you hopefully have gotten some rest and time for relaxation, and now you are in the home stretch. As a principal there are some key things we notice about our teachers during this time, and that is their sense of rejuvenation, determination, refreshed perspective, and general sense of another beginning. I try to help my teachers translate these feelings into practical actions.

Use this time to "catch" students who need additional support. Consider your previous assessments and ask yourself who are those students that you are still concerned about or who are the students you've noticed falling just short of the learning goals? I ask my teachers to give me a copy of their "concern list" at this time. This is a list of the student's who have not made the progress that you expected or are not advancing as the skill difficulty advances. Then the individual teacher and I brainstorm ways to support these students. You can also brainstorm with partner teachers at grade level

and don't forget any resource people who can offer insight or new ideas. A bit of prevention can make a huge difference at this time of the year.

Standardized testing will be here before you know it, so now is the time to start reviewing the skills that you know your students will need to be successful. Ask seasoned teachers to share test practice strategies and other wonderful hints for student test success. Remember, students' attitude toward learning and testing is a reflection of your own attitude- so keep that New Year smile on your face and stay determined to make learning fun and achievable. Check back to your plan book and review what skills you have taught so far. Try to keep these skills current as you move forward. Consider sending home review sheets as practice homework and take advantage of those five minutes before recess to play a quick review game. If students believe that they are learning, they will be proud to demonstrate what they know on tests.

When you feel that rejuvenated feeling fading away, remember how

far you have come. Team-up for support and ask for help! Be very specific about what you need and ask for it. I have a small traditional school but we find ways to support our students creatively. Our P.E. coach supports our students with behavior concerns, our librarian has a special "lunch bunch" once a month for the kids who do all of their homework, and our fifth grade teachers have a mentor program for the second graders who are struggling to make friends. We have designed creative solutions to support our students and the learning community. As a teacher in your community you too can do amazing things for your students and get the support that you need as a new teacher- just keep that open, fresh perspective!



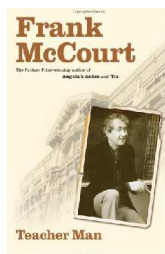
Mary Melvin is Principal of
Lanai Road Elementary School
in Encino

T-CARE Recommends...

Look What You've Done! Stories of Hope and Resilience by Dr. Robert Brooks - WETA/PBS "Look what you've done!" Whether they've failed a spelling test or dropped an easy pop fly, kids with learning disabilities hear those words far too often. It's no wonder they often give up hope. And it's no wonder we sometimes overlook what Dr.



Brooks calls the "everyday courage" of our children. Dr. Brooks says we need to find each child's "islands of competence" and then build on those strengths. He offers practical strategies for helping children develop the confidence and resilience they will need to succeed. DVD Running time: 72 minutes



Teacher Man by
Frank McCourt

His first day in class, a fight broke out and a sandwich was hurled in anger. McCourt immediately picked it up and ate it. On the second day of class, McCourt's retort about the Irish and their sheep brought the wrath of the principal down on him. All McCourt

wanted to do was teach, which wasn't easy in the jumbled bureaucracy of the New York City school system. As McCourt matured in his job, he found ingenious ways to motivate the kids: have them write "excuse notes" from Adam and Eve to God; use parts of a pen to define parts of a sentence; and use cookbook recipes to get the students to think creatively. A must read for new teachers!



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Closing Thoughts

Butterfly

Lindsay Gamblin: Multiple Subject Credential Candidate

This very special drawing is one that I will cherish for many years. It was given to me by an extraordinary child, named Gaby, toward the end of my first semester of student teaching. I was tired and overwhelmed to say the least. I had also grown very close to the students and could only hope that I had encouraged them throughout the semester. What I did not expect was how inspired I could be from such an act of kindness.



Rite now you are a Catapiler
trying to learn how to be a
teacher but leater you will
be a beautiful butterfly
teaching a class

Birthday card for Miss Gamblin from Gaby - 8 years

Links to Visit:



www.csun.edu/education/ctl/tcare

www.callutheran.edu/counseling_services/

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T-CARE is dedicated to help teaching professionals, at all experience levels, to explore the developmental stages in their career. Through this process, T-CARE will endeavor to establish and maintain a close, mutually-supportive network of teaching professionals who will work together to:

- gain a deep appreciation for the challenges all helping professionals confront,
- sensitize teaching professional to the value of cognitive and behavioral self-affirming practices, and
- help them to develop higher levels of resiliency and job satisfaction.