T-CARE

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I am on sabbatical this semester.

Sabbatical. What a lovely word. Urban Dictionary terms it a "prolonged hiatus in the career of an otherwise successful individual taken in order to fulfill some dream, e.g., writing a book or travelling extensively. Some universities…offer a paid sabbatical as an employee benefit."

It is indeed a benefit. And yes, I get the irony that I'm still writing this column, overseeing the publication of this issue, and occasionally meddling in the affairs of my office. But I don't have to and, in fact, I'm encouraged not to. For a whole semester, I am on a "prolonged hiatus" to fulfill a dream. How fortunate am I!

Officially, my dream—at least for purposes of the university—is to write a book while on sabbatical. I am certainly doing that (and in fact, I have one coming out in August so I've met my university obligations). But my real dreams are to (1) relax and (2) get organized. How many of you share my dreams?

Relaxing for me is to spend as much time in my backyard as possible. I find myself so much more creative and productive when I'm outside. I can write that book—in fact, I'm writing this article now—and I enjoy the work when I'm outside. I can't do the same in my office, as positive an environment as it is.

Getting organized for me entails going through my 24,583 emails (no lie—I just looked at my phone and that's the current number), filing piles of papers so I can find things in the future, and otherwise creating systems so I don't have to keep recreating them. When those things are done, I think I will be able to breathe again. I'll be able to look up and be ready to take on the world again. I won't feel buried under work.

I wish every educator had the opportunity to take a sabbatical occasionally. I know it is not our reality and that I am exceptionally fortunate. But think about what you would do if you could: Would you travel? Relax? Go to more movies? Write a book? Get organized?

Now take a baby step toward that goal. If you can't go to Europe, do a day trip somewhere. Grade homework on your porch instead of at your desk. Buy a MoviePass. Write a few pages of your book each week. Spend two hours to organize one aspect of your life. Do something positive that gives you a mini-sabbatical—even if it is only for an afternoon. Breathe. Focus. Fulfill a mini-dream.

Good luck. I'm off to plant some flowers.

Wendy W. Murawski

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TEACHING READING TO KIDS WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS

Like sighted children, children with visual impairments (VI) enjoy reading, staying up long past bedtime to read..."just one more page!" Reading also helps them be more independent and paves the way for their readiness for college and career. For children who are blind, learning to read means reading with their fingers and understanding the braille code. For those with low vision, it means using their vision most efficiently, along with optical aids and/or technology, to access the reading. However, regardless of the manner or speed, children with VI learn to read in the same developmental sequence as sighted children. They just require more explicit, specialized support to get there!

Reading achievement can vary based on students' eye conditions and severity of their vision loss. Some students with VI might overly rely on context to compensate for their inability to see text clearly. Some may have other conditions, such as traumatic brain injury, that can affect their memory or perception. Reviewing students' medical and background information to understand the particular eye condition and its implications for learning is an important step toward supporting these students.

Children with VI tend to do well with phonemic awareness and decoding, even when reading braille. They often need extra support in their reading fluency and vocabulary. Children with VI can fall behind sighted peers in the speed and accuracy of their reading. They use more nouns and less descriptive words. They may be more literal in their understanding of words and struggle with figurative meanings of words. How can teachers support students with VI when it comes to reading? Here are some considerations:

♦ Assess the current reading program to be sure it is balanced and comprehensive, and more importantly that it is completely accessible for the student.

♦ Be very consistent in using accommodations and assistive technology.
♦ Determine if accommodations are enough to promote students' success before modifying tasks by reducing expectations or changing learning outcomes.
♦ Allow students to use dual media (for example, allow students to read 10 pages of a chapter and then listen to the rest of the chapter).
♦ Use visual or tactile cues to emphasize key aspects of text or parts of a lesson.
♦ Be sure that text is of interest, within student's readability, and that the required time to complete the reading is within the student's toleration limits (before frustration or fatigue sets in).
♦ Use manipulatives and hands-on objects. As much as possible, use real items or items that closely resemble the real objects (e.g., for an orange, use a real orange instead of a plastic one).
♦ Use tactile symbols to mark text for braille readers.
♦ Use color to mark text for print readers who can see colors.
♦ Allow for brief relief from visual fatigue by using auditory input to break up lessons.
♦ Use enthusiasm, animation, and change up your voice to engage students with the lesson.
♦ Reduce your use of idioms, figurative language, and abstract terminology.

Kamei-Hannan and Ricci (2015) provide tools that help teachers evaluate current reading instruction for children with VI and plan supplemental instruction to enhance existing reading curricula with specific activities targeting these students' needs. Being mindful of the considerations discussed here can make reading more enjoyable and successful for children with visual impairments. We want them to enjoy reading so much that they sneak it in at bedtime!

Kamei-Hannan, C., & Ricci, L. A. (2015). *Reading connections: Strategies for teaching students with visual impairments*. New York, NY: American Foundation for the Blind Press.

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PLANNING WRITING WITH PUPPET PALS

Today's classrooms are filled with students who love using technology. Students write all the time through texting, social media, notes to friends, and more. However, when given a specific writing task in school, teachers are faced with complaining and sometimes even noncompliance. Some of this can be because students are not able to approach the task in a way that is personally engaging.

The application, Puppet Pals, can engage students and be used across writing activities and grade levels. Puppet Pals is an educational iPad application that allows users to create their own stories through animation and audio recordings that play within corresponding scenes. The Common Core State Standards require technology to be used to enhance instruction—so why not incorporate Puppet Pals to engage the learner and work toward meeting a set objective (Carr & Prater, 2013)?

Research shows that students spend little time planning for writing tasks (Bogard & McMackin, 2012) and what little planning happens results in minimal response to a given writing prompt (Peterson-Karlan, 2011). Puppet Pals engages the student from the start, the planning stage, then helps keep them focused and organized through to completion. Our own students were surprised to find they were planning while they were playing and in the end, they had a story that they created!

Yes, your students can get excited about writing. Download the Puppet Pals application and create away!

The five simple steps to work with Puppet Pals are:
1. Write one or two beginning, middle, and ending sentences.
2. Select Puppet Pals backgrounds and characters (or upload your own pictures).
3. Organize characters into Puppet Pal backgrounds.
4. Voice record sentence summaries for each scene within Puppet Pals.
5. Refer to Puppet Pal scenes and voice recordings as you write.

In our class, using Puppet Pals resulted in students' final written compositions with stronger character development, more detailed settings, increased sophistication in plot, and a more involved problems. As students wrote their stories with Puppet Pals, and with our teacher facilitation, they made the connection that what they was thought was "playing" was actually planning.

With constant interaction and feedback between students, teacher, and technology, students can be more confident in their written work and achieve a higher level of writing outcomes (Graham, Berninger, & Fan, 2007; Roth & Guinee, 2011).

Five variations of Puppet Pals, ranging in cost and capability, are available for students to create stories using animation and audio.
1. Puppet Pals Pocket—Free for both iTouch and iPhone. Scenes and characters are still.
2. Puppet Pals—Regular version is free and the "all access" is $4.99. Scenes and characters are still.
3. Puppet Pals HD: Director Pass—$4.99 for iPad. Scenes and characters are still.
4. Puppet Pals 2—Regular version is free and the "all access" is $4.99. Characters' mouths move as recordings play.
5. Puppet Pals 2: School Edition—$5.99 for iPhone and iPad and is an award-winning education tool. Book report, language learning, storytelling, and presenting temples are embedded. Characters' mouths move as recordings play.

Bogard, J. M., & McMackin, M. C. (2012). Combining traditional and new literacies in a 21st-century writing workshop. *Reading Teacher*, *65*(5), 313-323.
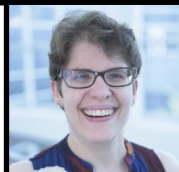
Carr, T., & Prater, T. (2013). Transitioning to the common core: Incorporating iPads into reading/English language arts. *Society for Information Technology and Teacher Education International Conference*, *1*, 3855-3858.

Graham, S., Berninger, V., & Fan, W. (2007). The structural relation-ship between writing attitude and writing achievement in first and third grade students. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, *32*, 516-536.

Peterson-Karlan, G. R. (2011). Technology to support writing by students with learning and academic disabilities: Recent research trends and findings. *Assistive Technology Outcomes and Benefits*, *7*(1), 39-62.

Roth, K., & Guinee, K. (2011). Ten minutes a day: The impact of interactive writing instruction on first graders' independent writing. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, *11*(3), 331-361.

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READY, SET, GO...CLASSROOM SUCCESS FROM DAY ONE!

Congratulations! You just scored a teaching contract. You are excited to pay off debt and begin your journey. You might have even begun to think about what type of theme you will have throughout your classroom walls and you may already purchased motivational posters. We caution you—STOP!

Students don't care what is on your walls or what hands-on lesson you have prepared if your classroom is not set up for success. You must make it to the finish line, which takes thoughtful and resourceful collaborative planning before day one with students.

Take a few tips from two veteran teachers and teacher educators. These are your first steps as a new teacher!

Learn about the district (yes, they are the boss). What are the instructional and behavioral goals of your new district? What models for instruction and assessment, as well as structures for behavioral management, are expected and supported in the district and at your site? These must be well known before your classroom preparations. It is critical to understand the context and responsibilities of your position as a district employee on behalf of students and families of the community.

Plan (don't just hope) for an effective learning environment. Behavior management can quickly become your greatest frustration. Remember, kids are people too. They forget things, get cranky, and are emotional. Don't punish students for being human or hold higher standards for them than you would for yourself. They are in training—not adults yet. Rather, consider yourself their advocate, role model, and facilitator...an awesome responsibility. Plan for mutual success by setting up an environment with clear, realistic expectations to be explicitly taught and practiced. Some great resources to help you establish procedures and routines from entering the room to packing up to leave, include *The First Days of School* (Wong & Wong, 2015) and *CHAMPS* (Sprick, 2009).

Plan for learning (so it sticks!). Once you have planned for a positive culture, successful learning can take place. Find out from your site if grade level/course specific teachers work collaboratively in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs; DuFour et al., 2016). The phrase, *many hands make light work*, could be no more true than in planning to teach. Once you have an understanding of how this work is structured, you would need to start looking into your grade level/course standards, curriculum map, and start a backwards design process. It is imperative that you first know what students must know and be able to do at the end of the unit/lesson. Successful instruction includes making certain students know where they are going—that means you have a plan to get them there!

Success as a new teacher can only take place if you first apply these key actions before you meet your students on day one. Remember to learn your role in the district and at the site, know the expected learning and behavioral outcomes for your students, and plan for each accordingly. Ready...Set...Go!

DuFour, R., & DuFour, R., Eaker, R., Many, T. W., & Mattos, M. (2016). *Learning by doing: A handbook for professional learning communities at work* (3rd ed.). Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.

Sprick, R. (2009) *CHAMPS: A proactive and positive approach to classroom management* (2nd ed.). Eugene, OR: Pacific Northwest.

Wong, H. K., & Wong, R. T. (2015). *The first days of school: How to be an effective teacher* (4th ed.). Mountain View, CA: Harry K. Wong.

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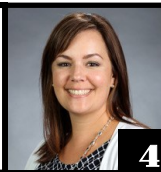
CONFLICT MANAGEMENT 101

When you hear the word "conflict" you might think, "I hate arguments!" or "Why can't this person just recognize that my way is the right way?!" Whatever thoughts come to mind, we can all agree that conflict is a part of life and can occur in any environment.

So, what is conflict? Conflict occurs when the things, objects, and ideas people care about appear to be incompatible. Conflict can arise in various places such as in our personal lives, in our workplaces, in our school environments, and in our classrooms. Conflict is inevitable, but don't be afraid! In fact, conflict should be viewed with curiosity, and by embracing this view, we can effectively manage conflict and learn from it.

Conflict Management Styles. The way we manage conflict varies from situation to situation. Although there is no one way to manage conflict, there are five management styles (Thomas & Kilmann, 1974). Knowing your conflict management style is key to managing conflict effectively. Explore your conflict management style and think about the benefits and costs of each.

1. Accommodating: Fitting in with someone's wishes to end the conflict. Example: "Ok. I'll change my schedule, so we can hold the meeting on Thursday."
2. Avoiding: Staying away from the conflict. Example: "Oh no! The team can't decide on a meeting time. I'll talk to them later to see what they have decided."
3. Compromising: Conceding or settling to end the conflict. Example: "Ok. We can have the meeting on Thursday, so you can attend."
4. Collaborating: Working together to end the conflict. Example: "Tuesday doesn't work for my schedule. Let's work together to find another date for the meeting."
5. Competing: Trying to win the conflict. Example: "We always have the meetings on Thursday and the rest of the team can meet on that day. Therefore, we have to meet on Thursday because it's the best solution for everyone."

Responding to Conflict. Responding to conflict can either help minimize or escalate the behaviors that are causing the conflict. In other words, our responses can either be constructive or destructive. Let's take a close look! Destructive responses focus on the personal attributes of the person and may increase tension. For example, you might say, "I didn't get my paperwork finished because you didn't finish your evaluation in time!" Constructive responses focus on the tasks and solving the problem and end to decrease tension. For example, you might phrase that same statement in a more positive way by saying, "My paperwork is due next Friday. When do you think you can have your evaluation on my desk? Let's pick a date." Providing a constructive response will encourage the person with whom you are in conflict to view the situation more positively.

Classroom Connection: Responding to Conflict with an SBI. When conflict occurs in the classroom, one strategy we can use is an SBI which stands for Situation-Behavior-Impact (Clark, 2013). Not only do we need to define the problem, gather information, and determine which conflict management strategy to use, we also need to determine how we are going to discuss and provide feedback to others. To do this, we need to describe the (1) situation as a circumstance, place, or time, (2) the behavior in observable terms, and (3) the impact the person's behavior had on you. What does this look like in the classroom? Let's use our example from above. "Last Monday during our planning meeting, we were discussing the date for the IEP meeting and you did not ask the rest of the group which day would be best. The impact on me is that I felt unacknowledged during the meeting. In the future, let's discuss which date might work best for the group."

Concluding Thoughts. Remember, conflict will occur, but it's up to you to decide how you are going to respond. Will you choose to view conflict with curiosity?

Cartwright, T. (2003). *Managing conflict with peers: An ideas into action guidebook.* Greensboro, NC: Center for Creative Leadership.

Clark, S. (2013). *Feedback that works for non-profit organizations.* Greensboro, NC: CCL Press.

Sharpe, D., & Johnson, E. (2002). *An ideas into action guidebook: Managing conflict with your boss.* Greensboro, NC: Center for Creative Leadership.

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World Views

What Really Works…In the United Arab Emirates

The educational authorities in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), as per the vision of the rulers, emphasizes the importance of education among its citizens and the students in total, and consider this as one of key pillars to deliver the 2021 Vision. Education is the pillar on which the edifice of any country is built. This realization has led the developed countries to go all out to ensure quality in the educational services they render. The UAE recognizes the vital importance of binding the potential of its human resources and cultivating a knowledge-based society in order to compete effectively on the global stage through the notion of value based education.

The UAE have achieved many milestones since the early 1970s. Government schools rose from 132 in 1972 to 685 in 2013 and include more than 305,000 students, while private schools have increased from 18 to 489, and currently enroll over 605,000 students (Clerk, 2014). The first university of the UAE was established in 1976, and today—less than 50 years later—the number of universities has increased to 100 and the students have increased from 502 to 15,000 (Staff writer, 2017).

However, it is a matter of significant concern that in this part of the world, a good percentage of students lack Value Based Learning, in terms of commitment, adaptability and an understanding of the importance of education. Value Based Education is a system that the UAE is determined to use to advance its educational agenda. It is acknowledged all over the world that "Value Based Education" is the only instrument for transforming national talents into national progress. In this context, Value Based Education means the students have to cherish the tenets: Quality Education, Self-respect and a Desire to Respect Others, Duty Consciousness, and Grow Up as Responsible Individuals.

Value Based Education is indispensable in a multicultural environment like the UAE, since students lack intrinsic motivation due to the demographic structure where 88% of the population is expatriate and only 12% are the locals. Most of the students here are brought up from extremely affluent backgrounds and hardly realize the importance of education, since they have not had to be educated or work due to their affluent situations. Thus, teachers in the UAE believe that value-based education should be promoted through both family and school context. The following strategies are proposed to inculcate value-based education among any students, but for us, especially among UAE students.

1. **Develop Awareness:** Teachers can create value laden situations or dilemmas through readings, films, role playing, small group discussions, and simulation. These can also be incorporated with other academic concepts and explained by the teacher in the classroom.
2. **Inculcating Positive Behavior:** Teachers have to be given the freedom to encourage positive behavior. Using positive and negative reinforcement to shape the students' behavior by the teacher helps to shape personality and positive choice-making.
3. **Develop Moral Reasoning:** Kohlberg's theory of six stages of moral development is the framework that is most useful here. At least half of the co-curricular activities should facilitate moral development. They consist of the students discussing dilemmas and using reasoning to attain a higher level of knowledge. Here the students can discuss different learning experiences which will focus on Quality Education and other desired behaviors.
4. **Encourage the Analysis of a Situation:** Students should be encouraged to study social and educational problems in society through projects and other means. They can be encouraged to critically analyze the truth and determine the evidence of unsupported facts and thereby arrive at a value decision. Teachers can inspire students to apply analogous cases and test value principles essential to reach morally-difficult decisions.
5. **Cultivate Commitment and Unity:** Being part of student associations and joining social groups enables students to perceive themselves as contributors in the society or class-room, rather than merely consumers. Being in such groups also helps students recognize themselves as being from a larger interrelated world, rather than acting as separate egos. This will help them develop a sense of belongingness and each individual will understand that they are responsible for their own actions.

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Clerk, K. (2014, Oct 10). Higher education in UAE. *Khaleej Times*.
Staff writer. (2017, Dec 8). UAE education. *Educational Journal*. http://www.educationjournalme.com

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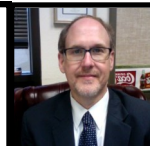
Work Life Balance

Wait! Not another task! I can't do anymore! We have all encountered challenges in our work lives that often lead us to be overwhelmed. What do you do in these situations? While I am no expert in this area, I am happy to share a few tips that help me maintain my sanity (if I really have any).

1. **Be sure to find time to laugh!** I am a frequent Facebook poster. No, not political rants. I find time to search and post humorous items. Make time to find something to make you laugh every day. Laughter is medicine for the soul and releases those "feel good" endorphins. So, make a commitment that you are going to find something humorous every day!

2. **Stay connected.** Teaching is often an isolated job. It is important to network and reach out to others for new ideas, strategies, and for camaraderie. Have you joined a new organization? Do you attend professional development? Been to a conference lately? One way I continue to hone my craft is to connect with others.

3. **Make time for your loved ones.** That might mean sitting on the deck and listening to the birds, going to a movie, having dinner together, or just watching television. It is very important for me to remember that my family must be first. Take time for your loved ones without guilt. That paper will get graded and that project will still get completed.

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