SECONDARY CONNECTION

MIDDLE SCHOOL / HIGH SCHOOL CURRICULUM NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 2018 | ISSUE 8

Back 2 School 2018

RCSD Secondary Curriculum Department

Catherine Beasley
Middle / High School Social Studies Curriculum Specialist

Sheri Blankenship
Middle / High School District Literacy Coach (LDC)

Jana Comer
Middle / High School English / Language Arts Curriculum Specialist

Brian Gaddie
Middle / High Instructional Technologist

Angy Graham
Director of Secondary Curriculum, Instruction, and Professional Development

Montgomery Hinton
College and Career Ready Preparation Specialist

Meghan Hutchins
Administrative Assistant

Rhonda Kilgo
Middle / High School Mathematics Curriculum Specialist

Cassondra Vanderford
Director of Career Technical Education and Acceleration

LaVonda White
Middle / High School District Mathematics Coach (MDC)

Lorie Yates
Middle / Hitgh School Science Curriculum Specialist

Contents

Rankin Count School District was well represented at the 6th Annual SREB College- and Career-Readiness Standards Networking Conference - Utilizing Powerful Practices to Engage All Learners in Orlando, FL. The following RCSD family members that attended were:

Caroline Primus | *History Teacher at Florence High School*

Karin Bowen | *8th Grade Math Teacher at Brandon Middle School*

Krista Smith | *US History/AP US History Teacher at McLaurin High School*

Tara Shipp | *7th Grade Science Teacher at Northwest Rankin Middle School*

Heather Garrett | *7th Grade Science Teacher at Brandon Middle School*

Sheri Blankenship | *Middle/High Literacy Coach at RCSD County Office*

LaVonda White | *Middle/High Mathematics Specialist at RCSD County Office*

Angy Graham | *Director of Secondary Curriculum, Instruction, and Professional Development at RCSD County Office*

The College- and Career-Readiness Standards Networking Conference connects teams of educators - teachers, school and district leaders - to improve student learning through literacy and mathematics instruction and advance student achievement in all content areas.

Educators from across the national were able to network and share their success stories about how their classrooms, schools and districts have been transformed through SREB's powerful literacy and mathematics practices, which are the foundation of the Literacy Design Collaborative (LDC) and the Mathematics Design Collaborative (MDC).

SREB

2018

Caroline Primus

History Teacher
Florence High School

HyperDocs

One of the most useful programs I learned about at this year's SREB Conference was the HyperDoc. HyperDocs use Google sharing with docs and slides to guide students through activities in which they complete both individual and collaborative work to meet a learning objective. I was especially excited about it because the process it uses follows the same instructional ladder as LDC, so it is easily merged with that. It builds up their knowledge and skills as they work through each step. It's also great because it has a variety of activities for different learners; sometimes students can even make a choice between a few, so it gives them ownership. Other pros: it makes great use of our technology, fosters collaboration, and makes teachers facilitators.

My explanation probably isn't enough to understand it, so check it out for yourself here:

Link to Presentation that explains HyperDocs and "Carrying Capacity" example: bit.ly/HSTW2018Engage

Link to "Carrying Capacity" HyperDoc: http://bit.ly/HyperDocLDC

That's a science example, but the HyperDoc website contains many more. As a history teacher, I was able to search and find plenty that apply to my classes. You can tweak as needed or create your own! Other teachers said that it may be quite a bit of work on the front end, but it's worth it.

Here's the website where you can search under "Teachers Give Teachers": https://hyperdocs.co/

Here's the steps the presenters gave for creating your own: http://bit.ly/How2HyperDoc

Karin Bowen, NBCT

8th Grade Math
Brandon Middle School

Rules that Expire

The most impressive session I went to was conducted by authors Sarah Bush and Karen Karp. They are two of the three authors of the most downloaded article in NCTM, National Council for Teachers of Mathematics, history. The article was titled "13 Rules that Expire." This article, which talks about some of the tips, tricks, or shortcuts elementary school teachers show their students that eventually become obsolete, was named article of the year in 2014 and is now in consideration for article of the decade. Following the success of this article, Karp, Bush, and another teacher Barbara Dougherty, wrote similar articles for Middle School and High School.

I have been there; we think we are helping students when we say something to the effect of "yes, when you add, the numbers always get bigger." We think we're helping them find success but in reality we are setting them up for failure. Consider the low performing student who looks for any tool he or she can grab onto to help find success. They latch on to such a statement and do not let go. What happens when that same student is introduced to negative numbers in sixth grade? Suddenly the rule he or she has used for years has expired. It no longer works. It is no longer valid. We have just told that student that math is arbitrary when it is not. We must work to avoid these tips and tricks. We must teach students conceptually so they may avoid the pitfalls these 'rules' create. The articles they have written are in no way all inclusive but provide several examples of rules that have a shelf life. Additionally, the articles provide alternative language and notation to be used in place of these expiring rules.

Another point these teachers made during their presentation was the need for a "whole-school agreement." Gather all the math teachers in a school building and decide on a common notation and vernacular. Make sure posters about certain concepts are all alike. Do not use one acronym in sixth grade and then use the same acronym for a different concept in seventh or eighth grade. Agree on how concepts will be referred to from grade to grade. The last thing we want is students to say, "That is not what Mrs. Jones said." We do not want them to think at any point that math is magic. That sometimes the tricks work and sometimes they do not. If students have a true conceptual understanding, they will not need tricks.

With a current membership to the NCTM, you can download the articles for free.

Krista Smith

McLaurin High School
US History/AP US History

Student Feedback

While at the SREB Conference, Pam Purcell, who works for SREB, blew my mind by suggesting something SIMPLE to help tame the feedback monster teachers face while grading research papers/essays. She suggested two techniques. First, she suggested that teachers, especially content based teachers such as Social Studies or Science, focus on two of the portions of the rubric at a time. This helps to focus our grading and save time. The other suggestion was mind blowing to me. Using your rubric or rubric portions, make generic statements and print them on stickers (Avery 8160 works great) and as you grade your students' papers, you use the stickers. Yes, you can still make individual comments to the student, but what a time saver if the majority of your students are making the same mistakes. I plan to use these strategies in my classroom this year to help me tame the monster I call "FEEDBACK."

Tara Shipp

Northwest Rankin Middle School
7th Grade Science

The SREB conference was such a growth-time: Learning from teachers that have struggled with some of the same difficulties that we experience and being able to take good ideas back to our own classrooms! In science, vocabulary is an important part of helping students understand the concept. Being able to talk about the content and use appropriate vocabulary is crucial for showing their knowledge. Many of the presenters gave ideas on how to not only work with vocabulary but how to think deeper about the words they were learning. A couple of ideas that I really liked were the "Word Sort" and the "Frayer Model."

The "Word Sort" helps students connect the vocabulary words so that they can see how they are related to each other. Students can sort the words in a way of their choosing or in the manner that the teacher instructs.

The "Frayer Model" helps them organize the vocabulary words by asking them to find the definition, characteristics, examples, and non-examples. Students are able to see correlations between the words and how they function within the content students are working on.

The bitly below has instructions for these two ideas and several others that focus on thinking through reading.

http://bit.ly/vocabpdf

Defining Student Discourse

The Case for Student Discourse - Is it Important to Cultivate?

by Sheri Blankenship

The Case for Academic Discourse

Talk. Why in the world would I want to let my students talk!? They talk alright–just not about anything we are doing in class!

You may have heard teachers make comments like this or have even had a few of these thoughts yourself at one time or another! And they are right – students WILL talk about all kinds of things that are not subject-related... IF we as teachers don`t set the environment and expectations for something different. That something different is Academic Discourse, and it can truly transform the level of thinking and concept acquisition in the secondary classroom. All students can benefit from intentional, teacher-designed learning experiences that ask students to use conversation as an effective tool to make meaning about content, but it is worth noting that research indicates that the struggling students benefit the most from this type of interaction (Fisher, Frey, Hattie, & Thayre 83). You would think, then, that all teachers would be utilizing conversation strategies and building the skills necessary for students to have this kind of repeated experience with their course content. This, though, does not seem to be the case. In their book Visible Learning for Literacy, leading secondary literacy experts Douglas Fisher, Nancy Frey, and John Hattie note that "Although there is widespread agreement that discussion is vital to comprehension and critical thinking, the implementation is less than robust. Nystrand`s (2006) observations of middle and high school English classes found that the average length of whole class discussions varied from 14 to 52 seconds per period–hardly enough time for anyone to deepen his or her knowledge" (Fisher, Frey, & Hattie 83).

Language Registers We Commonly Use

Considering the different levels or ways we interact in conversation can have some important implications for our classrooms. Martin Joos, a linguist and German professor, identified five different registers we use to communicate with others. As teachers, we tend to move back and forth seamlessly among the registers in both our personal and professional lives. When thinking about our classrooms, however, we need to reflect on both our own most common register and that of our students (See table below). While there are absolutely times in our classrooms for the Formal register in how we deliver instruction, it is the Consultative register that should occupy the greatest amount of time in how we design our instruction and learning experiences for our students in order to the have the greatest impact on their internalization of the content and in their continued development of the skill to be able to effectively engage in conversation about content. Douglas Fisher, Nancy Frey, et. al, in their book Teaching Literacy in the Visible Learning Classroom, discuss this type of effective talk in Chapters Four and Five, making the case as follows: "...this form of instruction assumes a higher level of authority on the

Fixed or Frozen	Unchanging speech, such reciting the Pledge of Allegiance
Formal	As in delivering a presentation to the class, where interruption is not expected or elicited
Consultative	The academic discourse of the classroom, where information is exchanged and background information is provided. The consultative register is regularly used in work settings as well.
Casual	The informal exchanges between friends, where prior knowledge is assumed due to shared experiences
Intimate	Private exchanges among family members and the closest of friends

part of the learners, who co-construct knowledge under the guidance of a teacher who facilitates the discussion rather than presents information...Using the collective knowledge of the learning community, students consolidate, deepen, and extend their learning" (Fisher, Frey, Hattie, & Thayre 75).

Further support for the power of conversation in our classrooms can be found through John Hattie`s effect size research which synthesized 500,000+ studies related to student achievement in order to determine the most effective influences on student achievement. Below you will see what Hattie refers to as the "Barometer of Influence."

In order to have the most impact on student achievement, teachers and students should seek to be in the "Zone of Desired Effects" which is anything with an effect size of .40 and higher. When well-planned and used effectively in the classroom, the effect size for Classroom Discussion is .82 (Fisher, Frey, & Hattie 83)! How, then, do we foster this important strategy in our classrooms?

Critical Characteristics to Foster an Environment of Discourse

Community

Asking students to share in this kind of collaboration indicates a certain level of trust and risk on the part of our students. Cultivating a growth mindset classroom environment is certainly an important part of building community. Additionally, setting group norms and helping students understand the rules and procedures expected while in these kinds of learning experiences is critical and should begin to be a part of the environment of the classroom early in the school year and throughout so that students have enough practice to become comfortable discussing about content as a form of deepening their own and their peers` understanding.

Purpose and Planning

One of the critical pieces of this kind of classroom experience is that in order for students to have the opportunity for deep conversation, the teacher must have a pre-determined, clearly defined purpose for the activity, including a connection to an end goal that is standards-aligned. This indicates a stronger responsibility for the teacher in the planning phase of the instruction that will allow for the students to be set up for success in these discussions which are facilitated by the teacher but carried out by students. There are many ways teachers can help plan for student success including protocols and strategies that can be used with almost any content that is discussion-worthy in the classroom.

Below are several links to some common, effective discussion strategies with a range of structure that may be helpful for getting started:

Graffiti Conversation Wall
Save the Last Word for Me
Two-Circle Discussion
Socratic Seminar

Additionally, even though it sounds crazy to think that secondary students don`t readily know how to do this, you may find it necessary to help students learn how to truly have interactive conversation with one another in the beginning, especially surrounding content. One resource I found helpful was this Bounce Card that can be shared with students to help them with "bouncing" the conversation back and forth with other group members by giving them starter stems they can use to better interact.

Why engage students in this kind of thinking and interaction? The research provides a compelling case for finding ways to make academic discourse a part of our classrooms. Ultimately, "Teachers who create space for students to pose questions, wrestle with complex issues, clarify thinking, speculate, probe, disagree, resolve problems, and reach consensus are employing a dialogic approach to instruction...this form of instruction assumes a higher level of authority on the part of the learners, who co-construct knowledge under the guidance of a teacher who facilitates the discussion rather than presents information (Fisher, Frey, Hattie, & Thayre 75)," and while it may seem daunting at first, there is true joy in watching students learn to interact with each other and being able to design and implement classroom experiences that grow student skills that transcend our classrooms! ■

Works Cited

Fisher, Douglas, et al. Visible Learning for Literacy, Grades K-12: Implementing the Practices That Work Best to Accelerate Student Learning. Corwin/A SAGE Company, 2016.

Fisher, Douglas, et al. Teaching Literacy in the Visible Learning Classroom. Corwin/A SAGE Company, 2017.

10 Tips for Creating an Innovative Science Classroom

by Lorie Yates

When we hear or see the word 'innovation,' we often think of technology and design. However, innovation as it relates to the science classroom is more than just a design, a product, or a technology. Innovation is a mindset! It's a way of looking at concepts, processes, questions, data and outcomes. George Couros, author of *The Innovator's Mindset* defines innovation as "a way of thinking that creates something new and better. When we think differently about the things that we are used to seeing daily, we can create innovative learning opportunities."

Here are a few tips on creating an innovative mindset and classroom:

1. Make learning fun, but make it about the learning!

The science classroom can be one of the most exciting places in a school. We can do some cool things in a science lab or classroom! Engaging students in the phenomena of the world around us and experiencing that for themselves is a crucial part of science education. However, doing a fun lesson or lab that is not standards-driven and that doesn't build conceptual understanding is just that...a fun "activity." Engagement is a good thing - it gets students excited about our content and helps build relationships with them. But, we must also equip students with the content background and skills they need to take ownership of their learning and not just depend on us. They need to know how to ask questions, solve problems, and go deeper with their own learning.

Connect and Learn
Engaging Science for Deep Learning
Scan the QR Code to watch a video of the LDC Module "Squirmy Science" to see how a highly engaging lesson can result in deep learning of content, literacy skills, and engineering design.

2. Make every moment of your block count!

Every event should be a teachable moment in your classroom. Think about your lessons from the point of view of the student, and not you as the teacher. Make your classroom environment, your lessons, your feedback to students, and your assessments be what you would want if you were a student in that class.

3. Have a growth mindset!

Seek out new techniques and technologies to redefine the learning in your classroom. Encourage students to do the same.

Connect and Learn
21st Century Learning
Scan the QR Code to Watch a Video on Using Elements 4D for Augmented Reality Chemistry. Click here for the full Elements 4D Chemistry Lesson Plan

4. Use technology to redefine the learning experiences in your classroom.

A school can have the technology to make it a 21st century school, but that does not mean that 21st century learning is taking place. Technology is more than just a tool to enhance your lessons. Technology can be the way to open up avenues of learning that never existed before. Michael Fullan, of *Pedagogies of Deep Learning*, says "pedagogy is the driver; technology is the accelerator."

Connect and Learn
SAMR in Science
Scan the QR Code for specific lesson ideas for using technology in Biology, Physics, Chemistry, and Earth Science.

5. Have clear learning intentions and success criteria.

Where your lesson, or unit, is going should not be a secret to your students! Your students should know what the end goal is...even on a daily basis. Be transparent about what the learning intentions are, what performance you expect from students, and what success looks like. This will help students take ownership of their learning because they will know WHERE they are headed and they'll be clear as to HOW it should look when they get there!

Connect and Learn
Learning Intentions and Success Criteria
Scan the QR Code for STEM Learning article and video on John Hattie's description of learning intentions and success criteria.

6. Establish norms for classroom discussions, collaboration, and science investigations.

Setting expectations for behavior during various types of learning opportunities creates a safe environment for students to ask questions, learn from failures, accept constructive feedback, and take initiative to solve problems. We say all the time that so many students lack the "life skills" needed to be successful. We can help with that by providing them with opportunities to develop those skills in a safe environment.

Connect and Learn
Setting Norms for Academic Discourse
Scan the QR Code for a middle school teacher's strategies for creating scientific communities within the classroom.

7. Make reflection and feedback a habit! Reflect on your lessons daily.

Ask yourself what worked and what didn't work...and determine what needs to change before you go forward. Embrace the #observeme movement to get colleague feedback on specific areas you want to focus on in your instruction. Provide timely feedback to your students on their learning progress and performance. Be intentional about planning opportunities for students to give one another feedback as well. Click here to read Robert Kaplinsky's "Reflection on a Year of #observeme"

8. Be a life-long learner yourself.

Study your content. Practice with science simulations and virtual labs. Read current events. Push your own learning boundaries so that you can design lessons that are highly relevant, engaging, and standards-driven. Click here to browse free articles from the National Science Teacher Association's award-winning journals.

9. Be connected!

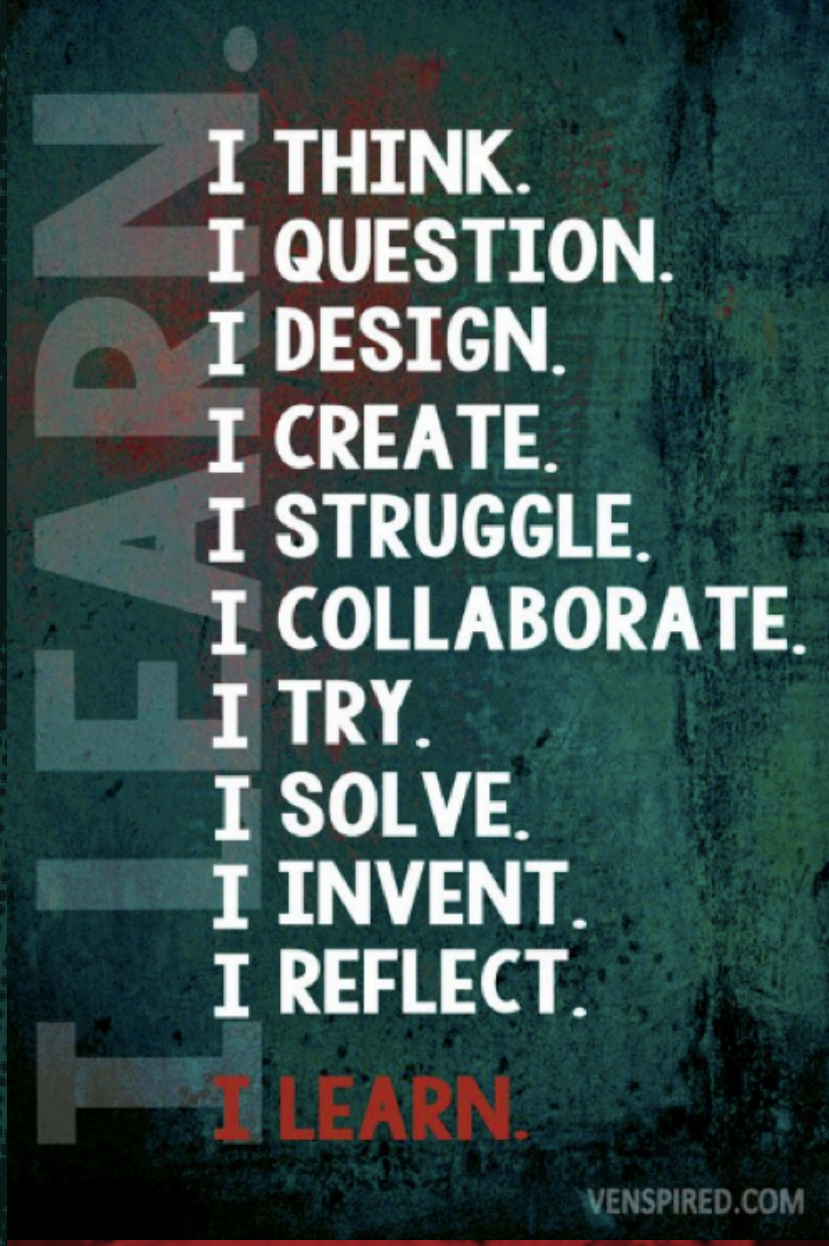
In the book *What Connected Educators Do Differently*, authors Todd Whitaker, Jimmy Casas, and Jeffery Zoul define a "connected" educator as one who actively and constantly seeks new opportunities and resources to grow as professionals. The book describes ways to use social media to find resources, for professional networking and to for sharing your own great ideas and expertise with others. Check out Jimmy Casas' Blog on What Connected Educators Do Differently for highlights from the book.

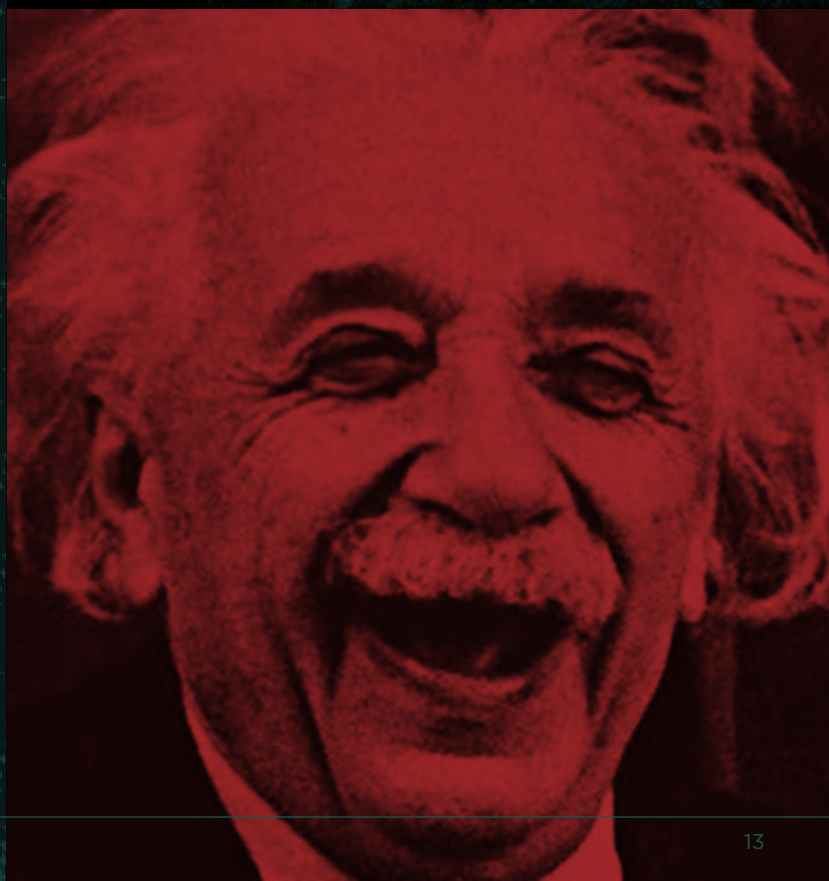
Connect and Learn
Using Social Media for Professional Growth
Scan the QR Code for The Simple Guide for Using the Hashtag for Teachers

10. Stay true to the essence of science!

"It is important that the pedagogical paradigm of Mississippi's science classroom reflects the nature of the content being learned. The essence of science is natural to children and includes discovery, observation, questioning, design, testing, failure, iteration, and hands-on application. Research-based approaches such as inquiry-based (IB), project-based, and discovery learning are all pedagogical pathways that make sense, especially in the science classroom. Mississippi's science teachers are encouraged to embrace the growth mindset and constantly seek to upgrade classroom approaches by experimenting and adopting methods that excite students to learn and become functional, autonomous learners and contributors. Students should be provided increased maneuverability in the classroom to formulate their own ideas to investigate and understand the scientific and engineering design processes" (from the Overview of the Mississippi College and Career Readiness Standards for Science p. 16). ■

I hope you are able to use some of these tips to create an innovative environment for you and your students. Embrace new ways of thinking. Create something new and better. Make this your best year yet!





A STORY OF HOW TECHNOLOGY BROUGHT ABOUT SOME DEEP THOUGHT

BY BRIAN GADDIE

ONE of the greatest challenges teachers can face is getting real and honest feedback or responses from their students. Many times, students are hesitant to speak out during a class discussion due to either being nervous about speaking in front of people or being unsure whether their answer is correct or not. There are many technological tools available where students can respond to teachers in a way they are not required to speak out loud in front of a group of people, such as Poll Everywhere, Canvas, Kahoot, Quizizz, Socrative, and many more. But this is a story of how Poll Everywhere brought about some of the strongest emotions

from a room full of adults and how this could be applied to your classroom.

Administrator or teacher/faculty meetings don't often make people think of joy and deep emotions, but on the morning of July 25, 2018, technology was used by a guest presenter in an administrator meeting in way that struck a chord with every person in the room. There had been a lot of conversation throughout the presentation about personal feelings and opinions on certain things, as well as an emphasis on having someone there for you. There came a point in the presentation where the presenter instructed the participants to take out their cell phones and text a code to a certain number in order to participate in the Poll Everywhere activity. The topic? Tell your deepest, most personal struggle that you deal with on a daily basis. It began slowly, but after a few minutes, there were continuous responses from people divulging their darkest fears and struggles to a room full of people that had no idea about any of these issues. It was powerful, it was honest, and it was proof that people want to share things about their lives with other people and answer questions honestly; they just need an outlet that allows them to do that in a comfortable manner.

"... after a few minutes, there were continuous responses from people divulging their darkest fears and struggles..."

Now, this story is not suggesting that you ask your students about their most personal and hardest struggles, but rather it suggests that, as a teacher, it would be wise to be understanding and aware of your students' preferences when it comes to participating in discussions. Using any combination of technology communication tools, teachers can elicit honest and desirable feedback from students that can, in turn, spark conversation, debate, or discussion within the class. These tools are there to make teachers' lives easier and offer students opportunities to participate in activities that they may not normally feel comfortable taking part in. This school year, a challenge to consider, would be to try to meet your students where they are. Offer opportunities for your students to do some of the things that are always done in your class, in a new way that may offer a better opportunity for those students to feel included and offer their input on classroom topics. Technology tools can be used for much more than just a "wow factor"; they can and should be used as a method of real student engagement and classroom management. ■

Extra! Extra!

by Montgom/ery Hinton

It is exciting to say that the school year has begun.

2017-2018 brought fantastic results for the district. Follow this link for a news report on some of the great work that Rankin County has done.

Method Test Prep further highlighted the accomplishments of the district. Follow this link.

The district began to allow our students who were in the 10th grade to take a free AtCT during the school day. Each student who made a qualifying score for a dual credit class SHOULD be taking that class(es) this fall. There are so many low (or no) cost classes that students can take in high school and gain college credit. This puts our students at a great advantage going forward. The incoming Sophomore class will again be taking the ACT on April 2, 2019. The Junior State administration is February 20, 2019.

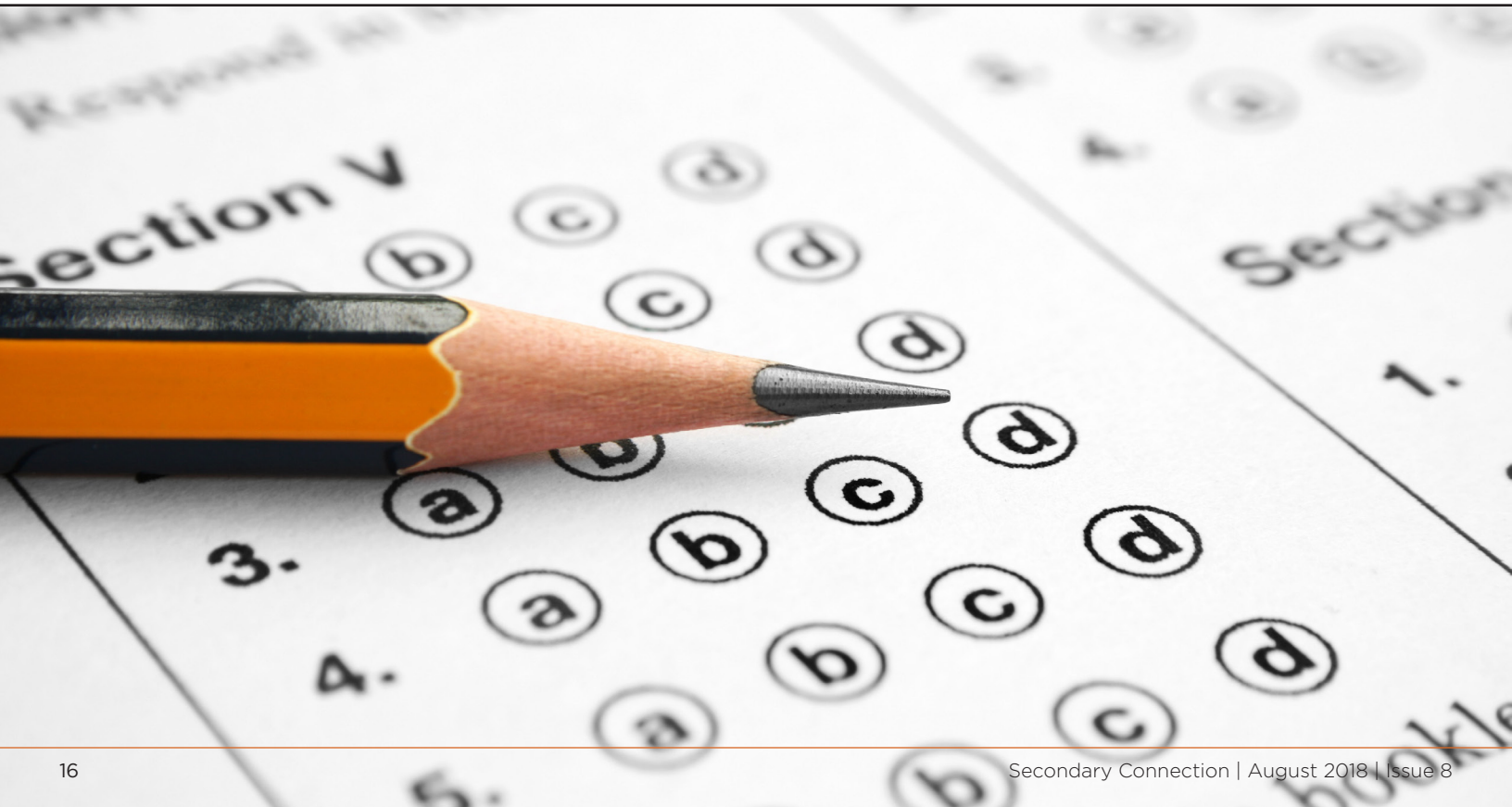
In addition, each Freshman in the district will be taking the PreACT October 10, 2018 for free. This will allow each student who is a Freshman to have a FREE ACT Academy account. Also, anyone who has previously taken the ACT will also have access to using the ACT Academy. Additionally, if you don't fall in either bucket, you can take a practice test and have your own adaptive ACT prep. The link for the ACT Academy can be found here. The link will give you an easy, three-step tutorial on how to use ACT Academy. The link for the YouTube video can be found here.

The ACT recently, in conjunction with the College Board, released a revised ACT/SAT Concordance Table. The link for the Concordance table can be found here.

Rankin County School District has once again pushed the envelope and offered ACT Work keys to many students in the district. We have the highest number of Gold and Platinum certificates in the county and are among the highest in the state. We hope to continue to expand our workforce readiness in all grade levels.

The ACT offered the test for the first time this year during the month of July. This coming July will again feature an ACT test.

We offer a lot of free resources that are available to our students to begin preparing for the test. Our website has in-depth ACT, SAT, and PSAT resources available. ■



HERE ARE THE NATIONAL ACT TESTING DATES:
(NOTE: NOT ALL SITES ARE GIVING THE ACT ON THESE DATES!).

TEST DATE	REGISTRATION DEADLINE	(LATE FEE REQUIRED)
2018 TEST DATES		
September 8	August 10	August 11-26
October 27	September 28	Sep. 29-Oct. 14
December 8	November 2	November 3-19
2019 TEST DATES		
February 9	January 11	January 12-18
April 13	March 8	March 9-25
June 8	May 3	May 4-20
July 13	June 14	June 15-24

REMEMBER

The student at each high school with the highest ACT growth from taking the ACT twice during the 2018-2019 school year will received a $250 award.

RESTOCKING THE TEACHER TOOLBOX

by Catherine Beasley

Summer provides many opportunities for teachers unwind, relax, and get away from the classroom crazy! Family. Vacations. Netflix binges. Pools. Long days. Late nights. Side jobs. Sleeping in. Shopping.

Summer always goes too fast, but RCSD teachers took me up on some exceptional opportunities to work through designing and building content knowledge around a variety of historical topics.

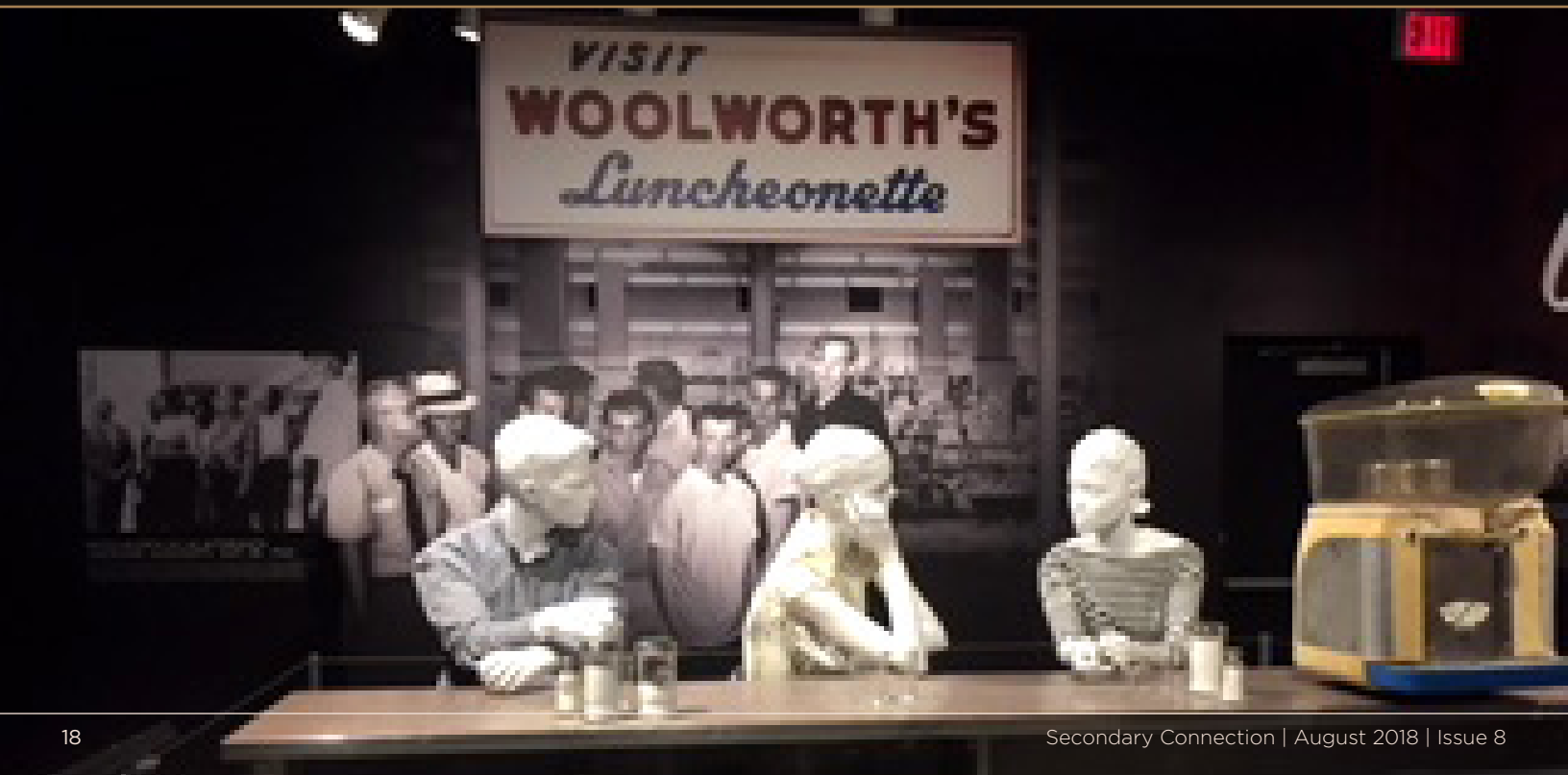
For the 2018-2019 school year, our focus will be on sources – building a historical context through a variety of content and getting our students to utilize primary and secondary sources to read, write, and think about history! Our focus study groups will allow teachers to continue to build their toolbox and opportunities to collaborate with content-specific teacher groups throughout the district.

Over the summer RCSD teachers took part in many experiences that helped to further grow a love of their content and provide some great strategies to bring deeper historical context into the classroom.

In Mississippi, we have rich history that isn't always the prettiest to talk about but definitely important to remember. A "field trip" to local historical sites in and around downtown Jackson, MS, provided our teachers with a wealth of knowledge that will, undoubtedly, change the teaching in their classroom. The day began with short walking tour of Jackson State University to see site of 1970 campus shootings, as well as COFO Headquarters that were a hub to the Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi, teachers boarded a bus (yes, a bus) and went to the African American History Museum. A short ride down the street teachers discussed the short story written by Eudora Welty, Where is the Voice Coming From? And, then, teachers were greeted by stories of Medgar Evers, his family, and his death at the home of Medgar Evers. Finally, during a stop at the new MS Civil Rights Museum, the group was able to take in all of the amazing exhibits that help to provide a context for the Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi, past and present.

Another teacher opportunity was provided by Facing History and Ourselves, out of Memphis, TN. RCSD teachers had three-days to dive into the Choices in Little Rock. The session provided a glimpse into teaching about Civil Rights through the Choices in Little Rock – who were the players? what decisions mattered? how can we get students to learn from the mistakes of the past? But, more importantly, how do we teach the next generation about choice? When teaching Civil Rights in the classroom there are so many facets to think about and the Facing History training created an opportunity for teachers to dive into the many primary and secondary sources that are available from this time period. Teachers participated in creative teaching strategies and were provided instructional tools that allowed for a deep dive into the content. Learn more about the opportunities provided by Facing History by going to their website – https://www.facinghistory.org/.

Echoes and Reflections – RCSD teachers were given the opportunity to take look into the ideas and concepts related to teaching the Holocaust. Teachers were given a one-day deep dive into the Holocaust. Here, they learned ways to create impactful and thoughtful learning and discussion opportunities for the classroom. The next day, teachers took a dive into the text, Night by Elie Wiesel. This was a very good day where teach-



ers were able to make connections between content and text-based evidence. Learn more about the opportunities provided by Echoes and Reflections by going to their website - https://echoesandreflections.org/.

Resources to Restock . . .

NBC Learn – take your students into history by watching it unfold before their very eyes. This year you and your students will have access to a subscription to NBC Learn. This will give you access to thousands of video resources for your classroom. These videos can become text for students to analyze and evaluate. All access for this site is already loaded in your Canvas accounts.

C-SPAN Classroom – provide videos, interviews, book talks, as well as all the daily happenings of Capitol Hill. This is another fabulous resource that you can use in your classroom to help bring history to life that allows you and your students to make connections between the past and present!

National Geographic - provides resources and activities that can help build knowledge of geography and map skills. There are some great resources to help create a better understanding of our surroundings! ■

"The most valuable part of the summer, to me, was the emphasis from Facing History, Facing Ourselves on guiding our students to foster a sense of identity within themselves. I learned that through this sense of self, students will be encouraged to look more deeply at the key players/events in our nation's and world's history which will in turn lead to a deeper interest as well as understanding of the importance of how history affects and guides our world today."

~Kristina Reynolds, Learning Center

"I attended the Teaching Civil Rights workshop and it was the best I've ever attended. The presenters were highly enthusiastic and motivating in their teachings. I gained great knowledge of strategies that I know will benefit my students."

~Kimberly Groves, Learning Center

"During our fantastic two-day training from Echoes and Reflections on How To Teach the Holocaust, one quote brought chills to my skin and is applicable still today with all of our various social conflicts: "When you listen to a witness, you become a witness." Everyone who attended learned how to present the heroes of the Holocaust using techniques and tools that bring honor to those who lived through this severely prejudicial time in world history. Everyone should take the time to familiarize themselves with the resources shared with us during this session."

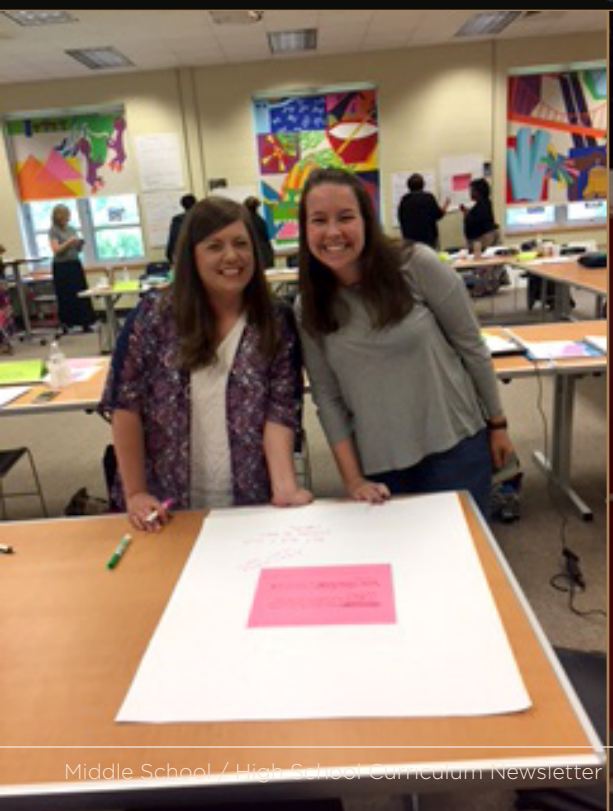
~Dani Edmonson, Brandon Middle School

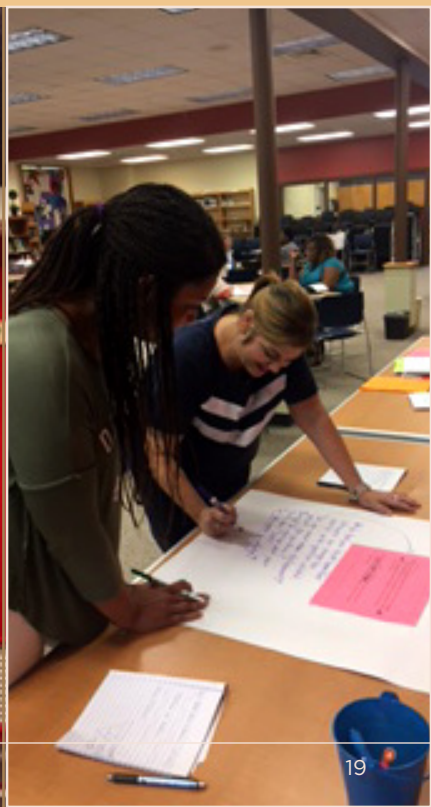
"The PDs provided to us this summer were the best, most practical sessions I've ever attended. I learned more in this one summer than I have in 18 years of countless, mediocre PDs"

~Kristina Reynolds, Learning Center

"At the Smith-Robertson Museum I saw this quote from an anonymous writer, "you don't need a title to be a leader." By learning about the Civil Rights Movement, I hope my students can understand that they can be leaders in their schools, communities, state, and nation. They have a voice and can stand for things that matter."

~Amber Armstrong, Northwest Rankin High School





Introducing the RCSD Mathtematics Teaching and Learning Lab:

A Professional Learning Opportunity Embedded Within a Classroom

by Pam Franklin, Ed.S. & LaVonda White, NBCT

Have you ever attended a Professional Development session where you left with ideas that you were motivated to try with your students only to go back to your school and get stuck in "Neutral," not sure where, when, or how to shift the gear to "Drive"?

If this sounds familiar, you will be excited to hear about the pilot of an innovative mathematics professional learning opportunity in our district for the 2018-2019 school year: the RCSD Mathematics Teaching and Learning Lab. We first imagined this structure in the early Spring while working with a small group of students. We were reminded of our passion for teaching as we basked in the glow of light bulbs flashing one by one across the room as students experienced their individual "a-ha" moments as certain math concepts finally "made sense." While we noticed students becoming increasingly eager to actively participate in their learning, the wheels began to turn. We began to brainstorm ideas to continue supporting students, while providing growth opportunities for teachers (and ourselves) at the same time. It was not too long afterward that the vision of the RCSD Mathematics Teaching and Learning Lab began to take shape and a formal proposal was written and submitted to the Director of Secondary Curriculum, Angy Graham, followed by Assistant Superintendent, Buddy Bailey, and ultimately to the Superintendent, Dr. Sue Townsend. The proposal received approval and we immediately got to work!

As with any pilot program, there will undoubtedly be twists and turns along this uncharted journey. With that said, we would like to share some initial objectives, goals, and points of information:

- The RCSD Mathematics Teaching and Learning Lab (MTLL or jMTLj^2) will be housed at McLaurin High School for the 2018-2019 school year.
- RCSD Secondary Math Specialists will teach one block of Algebra I to a class of 20 students during 3rd block every A day, providing a model of research-based best practices in action.
- Students have been selected to ensure a range of abilities and historical achievement, i.e. a true heterogeneous grouping.

- Parents have partnered with the school and district and given written permission for these students to learn in a lab setting. (Not only will students learn the MS-CCR standards for Algebra I; they will also be important contributors to teachers` learning).

- Math teachers will be provided opportunities to visit the MTLL, observe best practices in action real-time (both in person and virtually), collaborate with specialists during instruction to make instructional decisions in response to student thinking, and debrief immediately following during 4th block.

- Math teachers will have an opportunity to be a guest instructor in the lab setting to showcase lessons/tasks that have been highly effective.

- The MTLL will use classroom video (of math specialists as well as guest instructors) as a professional growth tool -- to view and reflect on the video and identify ways to improve as part of a continuous learning/growth cycle.

- Math specialists will grow professionally by utilizing tools, technology, and practices that teachers are encouraged to use in the classroom such as TI-Nspire calculator technology, Math XL, Plickers, Desmos, math manipulatives, FALs, formative assessment techniques, Illustrative Mathematics (IM) tasks, and other tasks that promote reasoning and problem solving, math talks, and productive mathematics discourse.

- The MTLL will provide a professional learning opportunity for RCSD administrators so that Principals and APs can observe, engage in, and discuss the enactment of best practices in the teaching and learning of mathematics to better support math teachers throughout the district.

- The MTLL will nurture/develop a positive growth mindset toward mathematics for administrators, teachers and students.

As the year progresses, lesson plans, summative assessments, and other resources will be shared publicly, as well as specific dates for strategic professional learning opportunities offered in the MTLL setting aligned with the Eight Mathematics Teaching Practices (focusing on Assessing for Learning - AFL) as follows:

Formative Assessment: Assessing for Learning (AFL)

1st Nine Weeks	#1: Establish mathematical goals to focus learning #2: Implement tasks that promote reasoning and problem solving
2nd Nine Weeks	#3: Use and connect mathematical representations #6: Build procedural fluency from conceptual understanding
3rd Nine Weeks	#4: Facilitate meaningful mathematical discourse #5: Pose purposeful questioning
4th Nine Weeks	#7: Support productive struggle in learning mathematics #8: Elicit and use evidence of student thinking

We welcome your comments, questions, and ideas and hope you join in our excitement as the RCSD Mathematics Teaching and Learning Lab revs up for the 2018-2019 school year! This will be an awesome opportunity for all of us (administrators, math specialists, teachers, and students) to learn and grow as we continue to move from great to BEST! ■

Pam Franklin

LaVonda White

Navigating the Waves of Personal & Professional Growth Through Reflection & Writing

by Jana Comer

During the month of June, six teachers from across the Rankin County School District set sail on a voyage of both personal and professional growth in order to refine their own instructional practices by reflecting on literacy in the 21st century classroom.

Navigating the course, Voncille Anderson facilitated the three-week journey in which participants observed the art of implementing research-based best practices from the perspective of a learner. Zach Roberts, English teacher at Brandon High School, acknowledged, "The summer writing institute will make even great teachers more effective. It taught me the value of considering the learner`s perspective, the importance of reflection, and the power of sharing writing with others as a community of learners. If you have the opportunity, you should do everything in your power to attend."

As educators, reflection is a critical component of our every day practice in order to ensure that each and every one of our students is successful. Emily Wade, eighth grade English teacher at Brandon Middle School, reflectively affirmed, "I realized how much my students were missing out on learning because of the way that writing was being done in my classroom. I knew that I could not go back to just assigning writing and grading it, but that I would have to teach writing and take time to provide feedback. I realized how much of my frustration over writing wasn`t about the students but was actually about my poor practice in not giving students the chance to learn from their mistakes along the way."

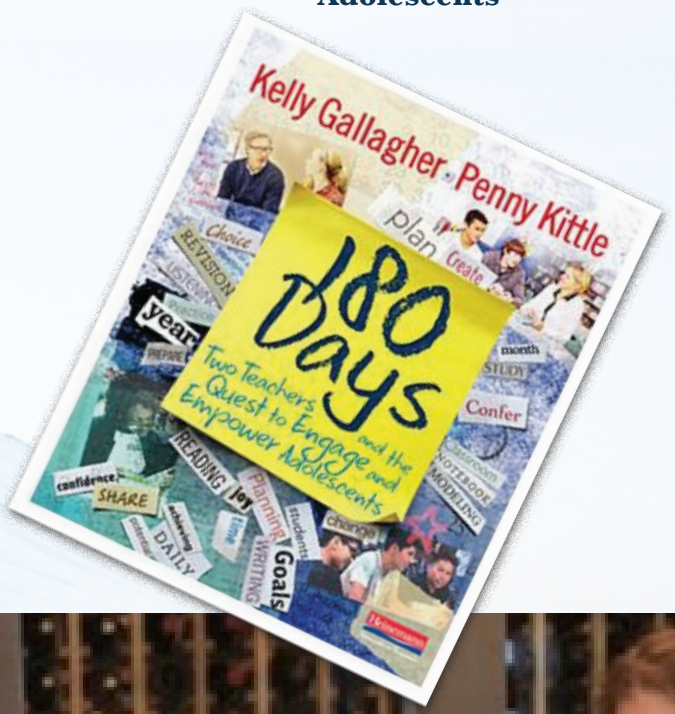
The Rankin County School District is second to none in an abundance of categories, more especially in the opportunity to grow both personally and professionally. As we embark on this new year, this new voyage, I challenge each of us to utilize the many wonderful resources our district provides to navigate the tides of our own personal and professional growth in an effort to achieve our district goal of moving from great to best. ■

Additional Resources

National Writing Project

Mississippi Writing & Thinking Institute

180 Days: Two Teachers & the Quest to Engage and Empower Adolescents



Left to Right: Eles Renfroe | Pelahatchie ■ Haley Holloway | McLaurin ■ Zach Roberts & Katie Stedman | Brandon High ■ Voncille Anderson | Facilitator ■ Kera Libardoni & Emily Wade | Brandon Middle

RANKIN COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

GREAT TO BEST