

SECONDARY

CONNECTION

Middle School / High School Curriculum Newsletter

April 2020 | Issue 15

the Art *of* Teaching



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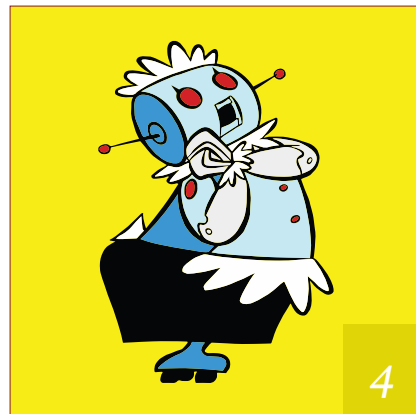
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TRADITION OF EXCELLENCE

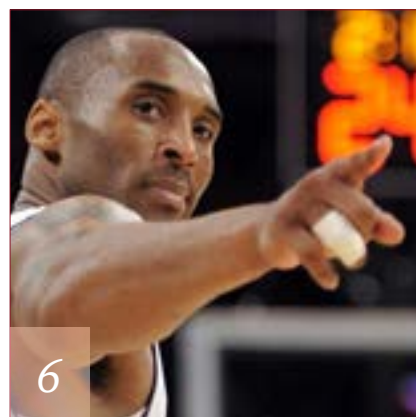


4

4 | MAKE TECH WORK FOR YOU

With the constant coming and going of our daily life, we often feel overwhelmed to check the next item off our to do list. Discover techie tools to help you become more productive and feel relaxed.

by Stephanie Cotnam



6

6 | MAMBA MENTALITY

Similar to competing and excelling at a sport, being advantageous in molding thousands of young minds all with different skill sets isn't for the faint of heart. So much so, the reality of the words in the previous sentence is overwhelming to even think about. Nonetheless, kids need us, heck, we need each other. To teach, to learn, to support, to encourage, to foster vulnerability --all while we focus on the process.

by Jana Comer

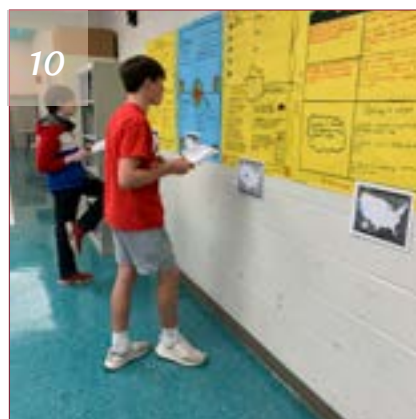


9

9 | CALLING ALL SOPHOMORES

You just finished the ACT in March and are wondering what phases should you be doing next? Well, if you decide to take the ACT in April or June, that is a great plan because you will get a chance to order your tests and answers. However, there are some other things to consider if you do and, more importantly, if you do not elect to take the test during the summer.

by Montgomery Hinton



10

10 | STUDENT-CENTERED ACTIVITIES THAT MAKE REVIEWS MORE MEANINGFUL

Lori Yates talks about strategies that promote discussion around key vocabulary and concepts, and that could be used for student-centered reviews as well.

by Lori Yates

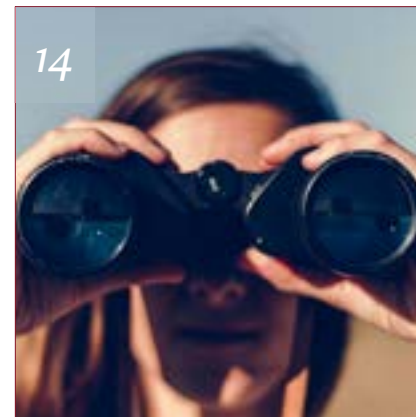


13

13 | RECHARGE YOUR BATTERIES

Teachers are "highly stressed." The numbers could be high for various reasons, both in and out of school. However, one thing is for certain, teachers must deal with high levels of stress on a regular basis.

by Paula McClain



14

14 | GIVE IN TO PEER PRESSURE

Although most teachers see the benefit in using peers to help students better understand the content being taught or even simply explain the task at hand, we do not always hold the same expectations for ourselves failing to capitalize on our own best asset - our peers.

by Rhonda Kilgo



16

16 | WRITING IN THE "REAL WORLD"

Did you know that Canvas is more than a place to store links to assignments and grade papers? Canvas is constantly adding apps and features that can help you level up your Canvas game. Canvas is partnering with various education sites to make tech integration easier. Checkout a few of these new features in addition to a few that you may have overlooked in the past.

by Zach Roberts

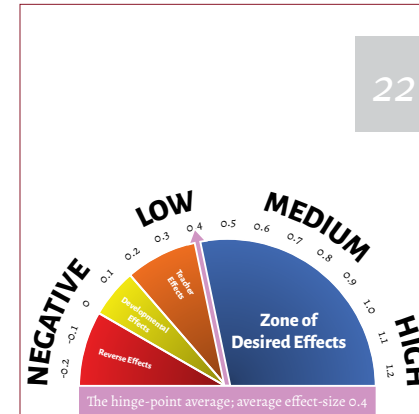


18

18 | LEARNING IN ACTION!

We learn best when we can learn from each other. I wanted to take a moment to highlight some of the great things going on across the district. Take a look at what teachers within your district shared about some phenomenal activities going on in their classrooms!

by Catherine Beasley

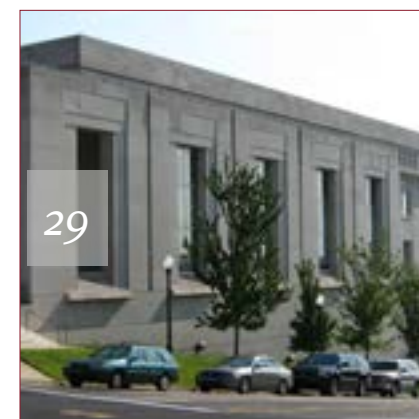


22

22 | CLASSROOM MOVES THAT HAVE AN "EFFECT" ON STUDENT LEARNING

Wouldn't it be nice if we could have research to support the validity of our strategy choices or even to better inform our instructional choices? Using John Hattie's effect size research allows us to do just that.

by Sheri Blankenship



29

29 | MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF ARCHIVES & HISTORY FIELD TRIPS

The Day at the Museum series allows students the opportunity to visit the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum, Mississippi History Museum and the Old Capitol Museum. Through a grant with the Kellogg Foundation and Cline Tours, MDAH is able to provide scholarships for admission and transportation to the museums.

by Catherine Beasley

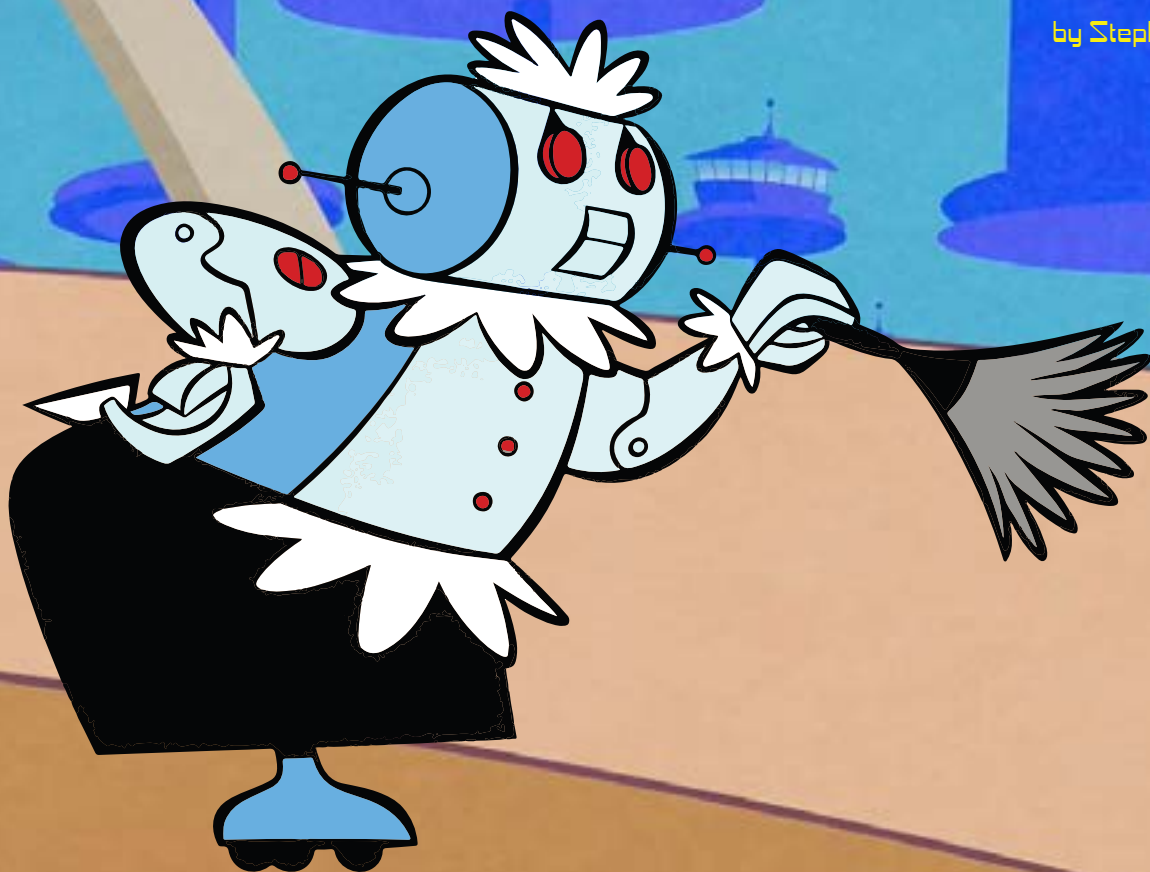
Make Tech Work for

You!

With the constant coming and going of our daily life, we often feel overwhelmed to check the next item off our to do list. How can we grade papers, transport one kid to soccer and get the other to gymnastics, buy groceries, pay bills, cook dinner, and maybe find a way to squeeze in the nightly news recap of the basketball

game we missed on tv. It can all be too much. I see and hear about these life instances on the daily from friends and co-workers, and personally experience them most days. When will it ever end? Well, to be honest, I am not sure that it ever will. The hustle and bustle of our daily life seems to be something that we can't escape.

by Stephanie Cotnam



As I sit back and think about this, it makes me wonder what can I do to not just survive life's ins and outs, but maybe find a way to conquer and enjoy these hectic times? I want to win at life. Now let me explain. I am not trying to have someone go wow, look at her...she has it all together. What I mean is at the end of the day, sit down and go, "Hey! I did it." I accomplished what I could without killing myself and seemingly enjoyed life that day. This is something that has been on my mind a lot lately, especially with the recent popularity of self-care.

Being the techie person that I am, I want to share some self-care tech tools and productivity tech tools that are helping my sanity on a daily basis. These tools range from sites we use at school to apps you can download on your personal device.

Work Tech Tools

Did you know that you can leverage Google to make your life a little less hectic? Tired of typing the same response over and over? Gmail has a template for that. Type up your normal response and save it as a template to edit and send later. This saves time and aggravation of searching for directions on how students can access their Canvas quiz. ([Directions for Gmail Templates](#)) Have a list of emails you need to send out of the next few days or weeks? Go ahead and write them out. You can now set a time and date to have them "automagically" email out. Just click the down arrow next to send and set the time and date for delivery.

Anyone else addicted to their smartphone? I use my device all the time to help me accomplish work tasks. I downloaded the following apps to my smartphone: Drive, Docs, Sheets, and Keep. If I am not near my Macbook and I get an urgent email, these apps enable me not to skip a beat with a quick response. Hate typing on your phone or even your keyboard? Did you know that you can voice text all of your lesson plans, college master's thesis, and honey do lists? Open up any of these Google apps, click the microphone icon below your cell phone keyboard, and just speak. That's it! Everything will be typed out for you handsfree. This can save you time writing papers for college classes too. I definitely suggest editing from a computer, but this was a life saver for me in grad school. (Links for using [Gmail Templates](#) and [Voice Typing in Docs](#).)

Google Keep is helping to "keep" Google users organized and relaxed. Forget your post-it note of items for your lesson plans at school, create a free Google Keep account to save time and energy. Keep has digital post-it notes on steroids. You can take pictures, create digital checklists, convert to a Google Doc and more. Have you ever seen a pdf or a handout at a conference you just love? You would use it in your classroom, but who has the time to retype the whole thing? With Keep, you can snap a picture and simply grab the text. It retypes the entire document for you! [Check out this how to by Tech Republic for grabbing text in Keep.](#)

Canvas can be a lifesaver at times. Preparing to get to school early only to find the copier jammed is always a great way to start your morning. Have no fear! Canvas is here. Take your

documents and load them into Google Docs. By sharing the document link, you can save yourself from learning the ins and outs extricating a piece of paper from the copy machine.

If you have a busy week coming up, you can use preset announcements in Canvas. Create your message, choose the post date and forget about it. On the scheduled date and time, you students will receive a nice reminder freeing you up to focus on more urgent tasks.

Here are some non-school related tech tools that might just help take the edge off your hectic week.

Fitness Tech Tools

Are you still going strong with your New Year's resolution to become more active or fit? It can be so hard to find the time to exercise or become more active in our day-to-day schedule. Recently, a friend of mine shared the MyFitnessPal app with me. It helps track meals, steps and physical activity for me throughout the day. While doing a little research, I found hundreds of free fitness apps to help increase my activity.

Did you know that YouTube has more than funny cat videos available online? There are FREE fitness channels. Channels like Popsugar Fitness, allow you to skip the gym, but find time to exercise from your own home. I love the idea of being able to access free fitness training anywhere.

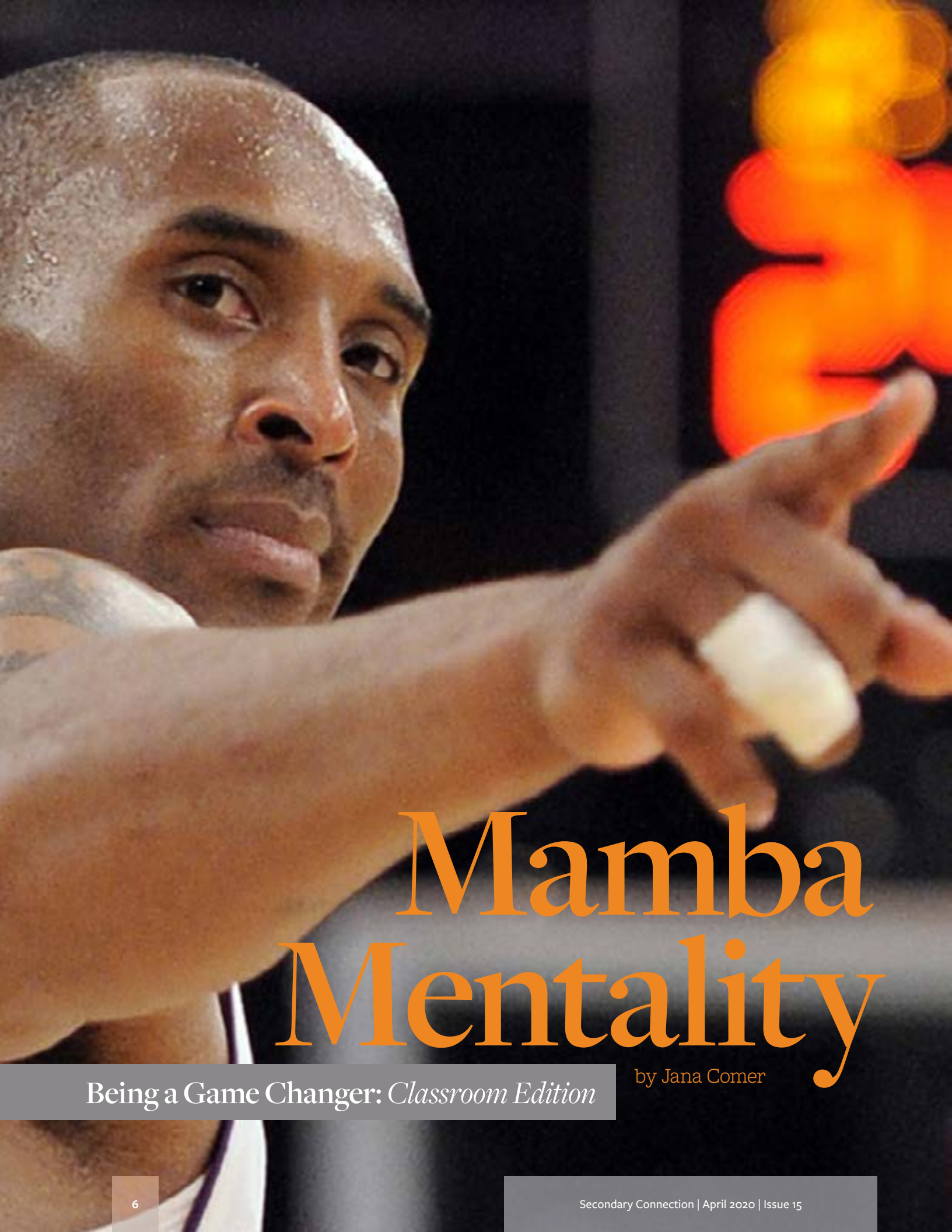
Google Calendar now has Goals! You can establish goals for your daily life. Whether it is health, fitness, work, or personal, Google Calendar will look for a window of time to implement this new activity. Google will notify you of an opening to complete your goal. The Goals setting will learn your needs and preferred times to notify you at better time periods.

Store Tech Tools

Does anyone else hate grocery shopping? Long lines and busy stores drive me crazy. If you feel this way too, there is an app for you. Local stores like Walmart and Kroger offer online store to car grocery shopping. Some stores will even deliver to your door for a nominal fee. This service helps me plan ahead and enjoy the time saved. Using the app, I click items as I run out at home. Then I just schedule a time to pick them up. Not only do I save time, I save my sanity from those long lines.

Amazon Prime is even stepping up their app to better aid their customers with the day-to-day essentials. With a Prime paid subscription, you can set up to have daily essentials like toothpaste, paper towels, dog food and more automatically sent to your house on a certain day each month. Pulling up to the house to find daily essentials can definitely put a smile on your face.

In conclusion, there are lots of techie tools out there to help us become more productive, feel relaxed, increase our physical fitness, and offer free solutions to life's little challenges. Just remember though that sometimes the source of our stress can be our technology. Don't be afraid at the end of the day to just...unplug! Disconnecting is not a bad thing and can help relieve stress too.



Mamba Mentality

Being a Game Changer: *Classroom Edition*

by Jana Comer

Being an effective educator requires performance, passion, persistence, and an intentional focus on the process. Collectively, we get it--easier said than done, right? Especially since said “process” often resembles an over-extended ride on the Bizzaro roller coaster. It’s quite the adventure filled with ascents, plummeting dips, and curves all at varying speeds and more often than not, at unexpected moments which can cause you to feel uncertain, terrified, and even nauseous. Here’s the kicker though--you can’t just bail. Well, I mean you could, but I’d highly advise against it. With that being said, even during the Bizzaro roller coaster moments in life, both personal and professional, we have to find the motivation and courage to keep going, to keep pushing, and to keep fighting.

While this ideology has been around for quite some time, within the past few years it has been coined by the late Los Angeles Lakers superstar, Kobe Bryant, as Mamba Mentality.” In Bryant’s book, *Mamba Mentality: How I Play*, he describes this way of thinking as “focusing on the process and trusting the hard work when it matters most.” Throughout the look into one of the most skilled individuals to play the game, Bryant gives a play-by-play on his journey to excel on the court and more importantly the work, dedication, and sacrifice that was involved behind the scenes in order to make that success possible. Even though his narrative is grounded in applying theory to practice when it comes to perfecting the art of playing basketball, this concept far surpasses shooting hoops. Mamba Mentality is a way of life, a way of looking at and tackling obstacles to make us better than we were the day before--regardless of the arena--dieting, exercising, reading, learning, and even in our careers.

Similar to competing and excelling at a sport, being advantageous in molding thousands of young minds all with different skill sets isn’t for the faint of heart. So much so, the reality of the words in the previous sentence is overwhelming to even think about. Nonetheless, kids need us, heck, we need each other. To teach, to learn, to support, to encourage, to foster vulnerability--all while we focus on the process. Being all of the things for all the people that need us isn’t exactly a cake walk, but it does pay

immeasurable dividends. As we navigate through the process, more especially in our profession, it’s imperative we keep two aspects on the forefront: the dire importance of self reflection and the ultimate value of modeling “the process” for students.

Making Gains Through Self-Reflection

When asked what separates great players from all-time great players, Bryant, the Black Mamba, articulates, “their ability to self-assess, diagnose weaknesses, and turn those flaws into strengths.” Interestingly enough, educational guru, Todd Whitaker, has pretty much the exact same thing to say about educators in his book, *What Great Teachers Do Differently*. Whitaker writes, “Good teachers consistently strive to improve, and they focus on something they can control--their own performance. Other teachers wait for something else to change. Great teachers look to themselves for answers; poor teachers look elsewhere.”

Compared to the 5 time NBA Championship player’s determination and success on and off the court, great teachers know they are the variable in the classroom, and their effectiveness relies on the expectations they have set for themselves. Even though being “great” or “successful” does depend heavily on the expectations we have for ourselves, we can’t do it alone--just like Kobe didn’t win those championships all by his lonesome. There is no question he had high expectations for himself and most definitely implemented tireless amounts of self-reflection; however, he also had teammates that came in clutch to motivate, model, inspire, and help carry the load in order to accomplish a common goal. As educators, focusing on the process of self-improvement by “self-assessing, diagnosing weaknesses, and turning those flaws into strengths,” we are using self-reflection to make gains not only for ourselves but for our “teammates” and students. When we make those gains, no matter how large or seemingly insignificant, we feel empowered to make a difference in the lives of those around us.

The actual self-reflection process will vary for everyone depending on the needs and goals that are to be accomplished. This

“Man, Kobe’s impact transcends the game of basketball. It transcends life. Mamba Mentality is more of an approach than anything else. It’s about attacking what’s in front of you with passion and purpose, without fear and doubt and without an ounce of quit. No matter what it is, good/bad; success/failure that’s your approach.”

—Demario Davis, New Orleans Saints All-Pro linebacker

could be in the form of a checklist, peer observations, filming and analyzing a lesson, etc. What should remain constant is the ability to recognize where we are, where we can grow, and expound upon that in order to be better than we were the day before- for ourselves, our colleagues, and our students.

Modeling the Process for Students

In acclaimed psychologist and author, Angela Duckworth’s study on grit, she determined that “effort and hardwork are far more important than talent when it comes to achievement and success,” meaning any accomplished individual focuses on the process. These individuals have a #growthmindset and are willing to be open, vulnerable, and persevere no matter how many obstacles and failures are thrown their way. In essence, they are not afraid to fail because they recognize that failure is healthy and provides countless opportunities to be better and to master a craft. They possess the Mamba Mentality. In his book, Bryant is very transparent about his willingness to try, and fail, and try again, until he has reached his level of expectation.

As educators, it is important that while we work through the process of self-reflection, we are transparent in modeling this for students. In *What Great Teachers Do Differently*, Whitaker explains that as great teachers, we are also master learners. Ultimately, if we are the master learners in the classroom, it’s crucial that we are modeling for students what it looks like to struggle, take risks, fail, and continue repeating the process until we have reached the desired outcome.

Teamwork Makes the Dream Work

Revisiting my August newsletter article, I discussed the ever changing realm that is the world of education, and the one thing that remains constant is the capability we have to pour into others and make a difference in the lives of our students and colleagues.

While this game changing mentality may look very different for everyone, the purpose shares a common goal. Additionally, as colleagues, we have to not only model for our students but also each other, the art of having a growth mindset- the Mamba Mentality. Every time we try something new or outside our comfort zone, there is a risk that we may fail, but we did succeed at trying. While we may not have mastered the attempt yet, we can ask ourselves what we can do differently the next time to produce a more productive outcome. We focus on the process.

Throughout the process and modeling the art of self-reflection, peer observations can be one of our greatest assets. Is putting yourself out there for others uncomfortable? Sure. Is it nerve wracking? Sometimes, yes. Is it easy? Not for most--we’re all human. Is it beneficial for the success of our students and ourselves? Absolutely.

With that being said, the term “observation” often carries a negative connotation for obvious reasons--so for this segment (or forever--whatever floats your boat), let’s refer to peer observations as a collaborative learning and professional development opportunity. Collaborative learning, discussion, and professional development are all lifelong skills, and what better way to model this for students than watching us, as lifelong learners, in action and interacting with one another. This growth experience should be viewed as “I’ve got your back,” not “I gotcha.” During your self-reflection process, identify your strengths and areas of improvement. Go see a colleague that’s doing a jam up job of something you may struggle with in your own classroom. Invite colleagues into your own classroom to see the amazing instructional moves taking place on the daily. After all, if we want to be game changers we must remember that teamwork makes the dream work. #mambamentality

“It’s not about striving for perfection, it’s about striving for excellence in mastery and being better than you were the day before.”

—Kobe Bryant

“When it came to basketball, I had no fear. What I mean by that is: if I wanted to implement something new into my game, I’d see it and try to incorporate it immediately. I wasn’t scared of missing, or looking bad, or being embarrassed. That’s because I always kept the end result, the long game, in mind. I always focused on the fact that I had to try something to get it, and once I got it, I’d have another tool in my arsenal. If the price was a lot of hard work and a few missed shots, I was OK with that.”

—Kobe Bryant



Calling all sophomores! Well, if you decide to take the ACT in June, that is a great plan because you will get a chance to order your tests and answers. The July ACT does not allow you to order your test and answers. There are some other things to consider if you do and, more importantly, if you do not elect to take the test during the summer. Once you have completed your runs at the ACT, it is highly recommended that you turn full attention to the PSAT.

What is the PSAT? Will it get me into college? No. Will it help me pay for college? Most definitely.

There are two tests that many colleges and universities use as admissions and, more importantly, as a scholarship determinant. Those two tests are the ACT, which all Rankin County School District children take as juniors in the spring, and the SAT, which is given at various locations throughout the school year. Both tests are predictors of future college success. Both tests measure essentially the same skills of math, English, and reading comprehension. However, the ACT also has an entire section that is largely based on science reasoning skills. That is the only real difference in the two tests.

So, where does the PSAT come into play? Well, much like the PreACT which RCSD children take as 9th graders, the college board has a pre-assessment as well. It is called the PSAT. So, why take it? The answer is very simple. The PSAT has a large pool of monies that are distributed to students who take the PSAT as juniors. You can ONLY qualify for these monies by taking the test during your junior year. If you do not take the test your junior year, then you will NOT be considered for these awards. The test is taking at school during the school date. Mark your calendar. October 28, 2020 is the day that RCSD students who sign up through their counselors will take the PSAT at

school. The test is cheaper than the ACT and is given at school during the school day. Additionally, there will be a three-day PSAT summer institute on July 21-23, 2020, that is open to all students this year. However, pre-registration is required as space is limited. Interested students can email Montgomery Hinton here to secure their spot.

ACT ALERT!

Starting your junior year, you should develop a personal email address such as Norrin.surfer@yahoo.com. You need to register for all ACTs with that email address and constantly check it to see if there are any alerts from the ACT. When you take the ACT during a school day, your ACT score is not directly linked to your account automatically. You can dial the ACT and ask them to link your two accounts for you. The ACT number is (319) 337-1332.

Please note that you should NOT ignore any notifications from the ACT. Please, if you receive any type of notification that your ACT score is being challenge, notify your counselor and principal. Do not under any circumstance ignore this. The ACT will offer anyone who has been challenged the opportunity to defend the score. While this is not ideal, should you fail to reply to them, your score will be surrendered. Click here for a story about someone who also had her score challenged. Click here to read the story. If you do, remember do NOT give up. Reach out to your school administration for immediate help.

This blog shows that it is not uncommon to receive such notifications. Click here to read. Again, in summary, create an email address not associated with your school email that is solely for your ACT/SAT registration. Check it regularly. If you receive any kind of notification from either the ACT or the SAT, take it very seriously and aggressively pursue all avenues.



Student-Centered Activities That Make Reviews More Meaningful

Students in Mrs. Sullivan's 8th grade science class at Northwest Rankin Middle School participating in a gallery walk of finished one-pagers.

by Lorie Yates

One of our challenges as teachers is how to revisit and review content in a meaningful way without getting too far off our pacing. We recognize that we may need to spiral in content and skills throughout lessons to help students retain information, but we may not have time to completely “reteach” lessons. And, although our immediate goal for doing any type of review is for students to be successful on assessments, our ultimate goal is that students actually learn the content and acquire a deeper understanding of concepts each time we revisit the material. Traditional “test prep” and test taking strategies are tools for test-TAKING, but those won’t necessarily help our students make connections, improve skills, and store information for future use.

In recent science professional development sessions, I shared with teachers several strategies that promote discussion around key vocabulary and concepts, and that could be used for student-centered reviews as well.

I’ve had teachers reach out about the success they’ve already had with two of these strategies: The One-Pager and Tic Tac Roll.

The One-Pager

The concept of a one-pager is that students take what they’ve learned—from a textbook, a novel, a poem, a

podcast, a Ted Talk, a guest speaker, a film—and put the highlights onto a single piece of paper.

The one-pager got its start as an [AVID](#) Language Arts summarizing strategy in which students use evidence from the text, as well as graphics, to convey the overall idea or theme of a story. It’s a very versatile strategy, and now used in other content areas as well.

One-pagers are essentially a combination of visual and verbal information. As students create one-pagers, the information they put down becomes more memorable to them as they mix images and information. Research on how the brain works has shown that the use of student-generated visual and written explanations is a powerful learning tool.

One-pagers also provide a different way for students to share what they’ve learned. The activity itself is engaging, and with the right components to the one-pager, the thinking students do can be richer, and more meaningful, than some of our usual summarizing and reviewing options. Their final work makes for powerful displays of learning. And, they’re fun to create! As the author of the article, “[A Simple Trick For Success With One-Pagers](#)” writes....“let’s not pretend that doesn’t matter.”

So, what goes in a one-pager? Ultimately, the teacher decides the components based on the standards and the purpose of the one-pager. Students might include quotations, key ideas, images, analysis, important names and dates,

key vocabulary and definitions, essential questions (and answers) and make connections to their own lives or real-world applications of the topics covered in the one-pager. Many teachers create checklists and rubrics so that students know exactly what is required of their one-pager and what success looks like.

There are so many ways to integrate this creative strategy into your classroom. You can also use them to help students focus on specific information or topics from a lesson, article, or book. One-pagers can be a way for students to summarize what they’ve read, listened to, or watched. And, one-pagers can be a meaningful, student-centered way to review important concepts.

Here are a few tips to help make using one-pagers a success in your classroom:

- Choose the elements you want your students to put onto their one-pagers. For example, key terms/definitions, visuals, key ideas/summary of information, connections to their lives, essential questions, etc.
- Create a simple rubric so students are clear on the expectations of the one-pager.
- When you first use one-pagers, you may want to start by providing students a template as a guide for how to organize information onto a blank sheet of paper. Click [here](#) to request free templates.
- Show students some examples of one-pagers so they have a model to go by. The examples don’t necessarily have to

be from your content...just a model of what one-pagers can look like. Click [here](#) for examples of one-pagers made by science teachers in recent professional development sessions.

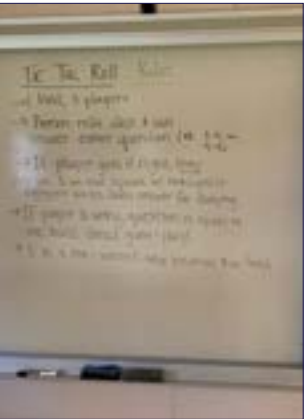
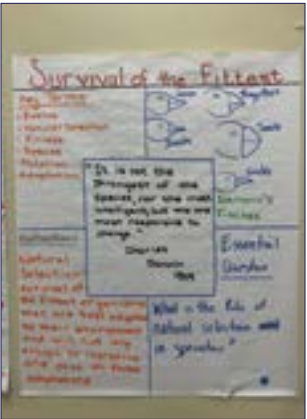
- Do a gallery walk of the one-pagers before you collect them, or have them present their one-pagers to the class.
- Choose a few of the one-pagers to hang in the classroom as anchor charts.
- Take pictures and upload them for students to use for review.

“Students are doing an awesome job on their natural hazards one-pagers!!! April and I are choosing the best ones from each class and doing a gallery walk with them. Fun!!!”

Mrs. Tindall - 8th Grade Science - Northwest Rankin Middle School

Tic...Tac.....Roll.....

When I was looking for an ice-breaker activity for our most recent science PD, I came across a discussion starter activity called Tic Tac Roll. The idea behind it is that participants roll a pair of dice. The numbers they roll correlate to a grid. Inside each box on the grid is a question they must answer in order to mark that space off. In our activity, any participant that marked off any three boxes in a row won a prize (they won the dice!). After the activity, we discussed



how we could do a similar activity with students. Here are some of the ideas we shared:

- Put key terms in the boxes and students must define the term correctly to mark the box. Have someone in the group be the “keeper” of the correct answers to check for accuracy.
- Instead of vocabulary, put questions in the boxes. Students must answer the question correctly before marking that box. You can have a group member be the “keeper” of the correct answers.

If you want more accountability, students could be provided a table where they right down their questions and the answer.

Use this as a discussion starter. After watching a video, reading an article or passage from the textbook, or at the end of a lesson, place questions in the boxes that just help students have conversations around the information. For example, questions like “Why do you think this topic is important,” “What is one thing you know now that you didn’t know before,” “Share one fact you read/heard,” and “What do you think is the most important take-away from this?” are all questions that are general enough that students

are not put on the spot with a “right-or-wrong” answer, but that encourage deeper conversations in small groups that might not happen in a whole group setting.

“I used the template for Tic Tac Roll and put in questions from the unit we are on now. I broke the students into groups of 4 - 3 playing and one holding the answer key and telling people if they are wrong or right. If they are right, they put an X on the square with a highlighter. At the end, I told them to take their game board and use it as an extra study guide for the test on Monday. They really liked it! Thought you might want a copy to add to shared resources.”

”My 7th graders played the tic tac roll game as a review for their upcoming unit test on Monday. And they LOVED it and asked if they could play it every time we have a quiz or test coming up!” *Ms. Nail - 7th Grade and 8th Grade Science - Florence Middle School*

1	WHAT ARE 3 WORDS THAT DESCRIBE YOU?	WOULD YOU RATHER GO FORWARD OR BACKWARD IN TIME?	WHAT DO YOU DO FIRST WHEN YOU GET READY IN THE MORNING?	WHAT'S A PET YOU HAVE NOW OR HAVE HAD IN THE PAST?	WHAT CURRENT TREND DO YOU THINK IS SILLY?
2	WHAT'S ONE PIECE OF HELPFUL ADVICE YOU'VE BEEN GIVEN?	WHAT WOULD STUDENTS BE SURPRISED TO FIND OUT ABOUT YOU?	WHAT'S THE WORST THING ABOUT BEING A TEACHER?	WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE SUBJECT TO TEACH?	WHERE DID YOU GO ON YOUR FAVORITE VACATION?
3	WHAT WOULD YOU HIRE SOMEONE TO HELP YOU DO?	WHO IS YOUR TEACHER HERO AND WHY?	WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE HOLIDAY?	WHAT'S A TEACHER'S MOST IMPORTANT QUALITY?	WOULD YOU RATHER BE CALLED UNDERSTANDING OR TOUGH?
4	WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE READ ALOUD BOOK FOR STUDENTS?	DO YOU WORK ALL BREAK LONG OR GET READY LAST-MINUTE?	WHAT'S YOUR OPINION OF HOMEWORK?	WHAT'S ONE THING ON YOUR BUCKET LIST?	WHAT 3 THINGS WOULD YOU TAKE TO A DESERTED ISLAND?
5	WHAT'S THE FIRST THING YOU'LL DO WHEN YOU RETIRE?	WHAT'S A FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL TRADITION FOR YOU?	IS YOUR GLASS HALF FULL OR HALF EMPTY?	WOULD YOU RATHER GET A GIFT CARD OR A HOMEMADE PRESENT?	DO YOU HAVE A FAVORITE QUOTE OR MOTTO?
6	WHAT WOULD YOU DO WITH A MILLION DOLLARS?	WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE FOOD OR PLACE TO EAT?	WHAT'S AN EMBARRASSING TEACHER MOMENT YOU'VE HAD?	WHAT DO YOU ENJOY DOING IN YOUR SPARE TIME?	WHAT'S ONE THING YOU'D LIKE TO HEAR THE PRINCIPAL SAY?

RECHARGE YOUR BATTERIES

BENCHMARK TESTING, STATE TESTING, GRADING PAPERS, TEACHING NEW MATERIAL, PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, BOOK STUDIES, AND THE LIKE...

TEACHING IS A CRAZY STRESSFUL! A recent study by two professors at the University Missouri looked at teacher stress levels and coping abilities of teachers to handle those stresses. More teachers are “stressed out” than you might think. According to this study, 93% of teachers are “highly stressed.” The numbers could be high for various reasons, both in and out of school. However, one thing is for certain, teachers must deal with high levels of stress on a regular basis.

OKAY, I KNOW I’M STRESSED... NOW WHAT?! According to an article by teacher Christi Wilson, in EducationWorld, there are things you can do that will dramatically reduce your stress involving school.

- Leave work at school.
- Share the workload.
- Take a mental health day.
- Arrive at school early.
- Avoid the Sunday blues.

1. LEAVE WORK AT SCHOOL. When you go home for the day...go home. Be present with your family, pets, and friends. Keeping your work life and home separate is just a good thing all around. After being in education myself for over 20 years, it’s something I have always strived to do. In fact, personally, I do not even access my school email on my phone. I do not want to blur the lines of professional and personal in that way.

2. SHARE THE WORKLOAD. Utilize your team. You are on an academic team for a reason, get their help when you need it. Are there things you could join forces working together on (like using common assessments)? Brainstorm what ways you can ban together to get a task done (like alternating tutoring).

3. TAKE A MENTAL HEALTH DAY. Yes, it is okay to take a mental health day in order to take time for yourself! Recharging your own batteries is vital in reducing your daily stress levels. There is no substitute for YOU. Remember though, that if you are stressed it can affect how you

teach and interact with students. Taking a day where you take care of you is just as important as taking a day off when you have a fever. Both are for your good and for the good of your students.

4. ARRIVE AT SCHOOL EARLY. I find that I do my best work early in the morning. Getting to my room just a few minutes early really does help. It gives me time to organize my day; thus, reducing stress. If you got to school just ten minutes early, that alone time could be vital for your daily success. After all, it’s quiet, peaceful, and calm...and that’s a wonderful way to start your day!

5. AVOID THE SUNDAY BLUES. Sunday does not have to be a day where you dread getting up the next morning to go to school. If you leave work on Friday knowing what you are going to do on Monday, your stress levels go down automatically! Just a tiny bit of planning ahead can go far. Leave Sunday as a day of rest and recuperation instead of a day of dread.

Finally, I would add one more thing to that list.

GET OUTSIDE (YES, EVEN IF IT’S RAINING)! DO something, ANYTHING outside. It could be playing golf, playing in the yard with your children, reading a book in a hammock under the tree, taking the dog for a walk, or getting out and going for a bike ride...whatever you choose...do something for you; preferably outside. It has been proven that being outdoors helps with our mental state, and we know that “exercise gives you endorphins and endorphins make you happy,” according to Elle Woods. There are currently 34 states where doctors actually prescribe outdoor time to their patients! The benefits are tremendous! Lower blood pressure and reduced stress are just the beginning! Remember to work on taking time and making time for you, no matter where it

by Paula McClain



<https://www.parkrx.org>

Give in to Peer Pressure: Using Peer Observations to Transform a Culture

by Rhonda Kilgo

WHAT IS IT AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT? As teachers, we often work in isolation. We find solace in closing our doors and teaching our classes on our own terms. Even when we're part of a team, best instructional strategies such as questioning, informal assessments, and student engagement strategies are left to our own accord. Although most teachers see the benefit in using peers to help students better understand the content being taught or even simply explain the task at hand, we do not always hold the same expectations for ourselves failing to capitalize on our own best asset - our peers. We ask students to provide feedback to peers either anonymously or using such tools as rubrics to create subjectivity in the analysis. We encourage students to be "open to feedback," and we say things like, "Don't take it personal - they are only trying to help." However, we don't always practice what we preach. Much like our students, we are reluctant to ask our peers for feedback to help us make our own craft better. We forget about the #growthmindset we talk so much about with our students. What is the benefit of using peer observations, and why is it necessary for administrators to implement this in order to build a culture of support and "togetherness" in a school?

Mottos such as "All for One and One for All," "No Soldier Left Behind," "A Boat Doesn't Go Forward if Each One is Rowing Their Own Way," and others are adopted by teams who have an image of support and success. These are everywhere around us in our classrooms and hallways. Where can we implement this same idea to

better our own careers? The obvious is to begin to create a culture where peers observe one another and provide feedback - both good and bad - to help us build on our expertise in order to prove that "we're all in this together." Encouraging these observations to take place out of content or grade level allows the focus of these observations to be on strategies and best practices instead of content. By taking the focus off of content, the observation becomes more objective and more closely models what we want our students to do when we ask them to critique the work of one another.

In 2016, the #Observeme movement began across the United States. Teachers were posting "look fors" outside of their rooms and inviting others to come in and observe them to provide feedback on these targeted areas within the class. Through this movement, rubrics and feedback forms were created to help teachers as they began to implement this practice in their schools. While these forms are still readily available and some have continued to participate in this movement, the increased demands for administrators to conduct more informal classroom observations and walk-throughs may be partly to blame for the popularity of the movement in our schools beginning to wane. In an effort not to overwhelm teachers with observations, schools have moved away from this practice, and it is no longer an expectation.

Is there a way to meet the needs of administrators and to reap the benefits of a peer observation culture without taking over teachers' classrooms? The answer is, "Yes!" One solution is to begin

to include peers as a part of informal walk-throughs where specific strategies or techniques are critiqued. Cambridge Assessment provides guided specifics on the best ways to conduct peer observations and help ensure success (<https://www.cambridge-community.org.uk/professional-development/gswpo/index.html>). Like the #Observeme movement, researchers at Cambridge encouraged using the cycle for productive peer observations: before the observation, during the observation, and after the observation. There is actually evidence which supports using essential questions created by teachers as the focus questions for observations (ASCD, Peer-to-Peer Observations, 2014).

For peer observations to be successful, the cycle mentioned must be a non-negotiable. The teachers involved in the observation should meet prior to the observation to establish a focus for the observation. Since most teachers are not trained to conduct formal observations, having a focus can make the feedback more useful. During the observation, the observer takes notes about the focus agreed upon in the meeting. Once the observation is over, feedback is discussed around the notes. It is imperative that the reflection involves a dialogue between the teacher doing the observation and the one being observed (ASCD). Administrators are tasked with finding ways to create time for teachers to implement each part of the cycle.

Most would agree that the part of the peer observation which is most challenging is the feedback. After all, teachers are not expected to know the best ways to do this or trained in this area. However, many of us ask this from our students on a regular basis. Just like our students can increase the depth of their own learning through peer teaching and feedback, teachers can actually be in charge of their own, on-site professional development by agreeing on a common focus which is observed throughout the school year or semester. Having this focus allows teachers to provide feedback to others outside of their content areas and makes providing feedback much less personal. Feedback should provide guidance in areas which could be improved but should also recognize strengths which can be shared with others.

WHERE DO WE START? A 2014 article in Educational Leadership describes different techniques to use for peer observations: scripting (a strategy which requires the observer to script interactions between teacher and students and student to student), counting (a strategy which has the observer actually record the number of times that an agreed upon happening takes place), and tracking (a strategy where the observer records where a teacher is in relation students or certain parts of the classroom). All of these serve to give focus to the observer. This article also provides a sample protocol for debriefing sessions in order to save time but still provide useful feedback.

In 2013, ASCD conducted a webinar featuring Donald Kachur, author of Engaging Teachers in Classroom Walkthroughs (<http://www.ascd.org/professional-development/webinars/donald-kachur-webinar.aspx>). In this webinar, Kachur outlined the biggest concerns and best ways to get started. The findings were from a study of 40 schools in 17 states. The study was based on the question, "How do we transform schools into learning communities?"

Participating in an initiative centered around peer observations helps teachers: 1) learn from one another, 2) take charge of their own learning, 3) measure progress, 4) acquire new ideas and techniques, and 5) feel more comfortable. In other words, teachers create and implement their own on-site professional development. From the onset, teachers MUST be a part of the process - planning the focus, creating the look-fors, selecting the feedback tools, building the schedule, and determining who will participate. The more teacher investment, the greater the buy-in and success of the program. How many times have you been a part of offsite professional development and thought, "How does this benefit my students and me? How am I supposed to implement this?" Using the outcomes of these peer observations, professional development becomes more tailored to the teachers' needs and those of the students. Even if the idea is to bring in a coach or specialist, that person knows exactly what you and your school needs to meet your goals.

There are several ways to begin to implement peer observations. Kachur provides examples of these basing much of the research on two models: Marzano's Instructional Rounds and UCLA Center X. New teachers could also be a part of these with administrators. These peer observations would probably be done to gather ideas for the new teachers. Those teachers and the administrators involved would debrief, but no feedback would be provided to the observed teacher since this was used as a way to grow new teachers in the craft. This idea was a part of Marzano's Instructional Rounds model. Another is to have the leadership team participate with administrators. The thought is these individuals will take what they learn back to their content area teams. Administrators may also decide to use volunteers for both the observer and observee roles of course relieving the idea that these are evaluative in nature. An all-in approach is to require all teachers to complete approximately 4 observations per year which last about 15-20 minutes in length. With these, there would be a debrief between the teacher who was observed and the teachers who completed the observations. This strategy is based on the UCLA Center X model.

In the bigger picture, helping one another, providing transparent and honest feedback, and discussing ways to build on strengths as well as address areas for improvement will only strengthen us as teachers. Imagine a classroom where students have the "hard conversations" with one another allowing us to remove ourselves and be bystanders while the magic is taking place - that's what a school with a culture where peer observations are welcomed, appreciated, and desired looks like to an administrator. We are great educators, but implementing peer observations can take us from "great to best" by building a team mentality. Our feedback for one another becomes an "I got your back" not "I got you." Patrick Lencioni said, "Remember, teamwork begins by building trust. And the only way to do that is to overcome our need for invulnerability." This definitely applies to peers observing one another to gather ideas and provide feedback which can be used to reach a common goal.

When is the last time you read a published piece of writing that was set up in the five paragraph template? Seriously, when?

This is the general question that Kelly Gallagher poses to teachers in his book Write Like This: Teaching Real-World Writing Through Modeling. It is a valid question to ask considering most people other than teachers, students, and maybe parents or tutors never read a piece of writing that follows this very familiar format. If that question has a clear answer, then a logical progression of thought leads one to wonder why teachers have spent so much time drilling this format into students only to have them abandon it once the write something worthy of being published?

The most likely answer is that it helps students learn how to organize their ideas on paper and fully develop them. Sure, that makes sense in the early years of teaching writing standards. Is it still necessary for high school students? Gallagher states that this is simply not the case:

“(1) If we are to build students who grow up to write in the real world, we must move our writing instruction beyond a “cover the state standards” mind-set by introducing our young writers to additional real-world discourses, and (2) In teaching our students how to write, we must provide them with authentic modeling--modeling that comes from both the teacher and from real world texts.” (p. 8)

Writing in the “Real World”

Making Writing Instruction Relevant to Today’s Students

by Zach Roberts, Brandon High School

As difficult as it is to accept, secondary teachers must come to terms with the truth that the traditional model we have always taught is not a panacea for all the writing our students will need or want to do in their lifetimes.

Being guilty myself of the “teach my students the way I was taught because it is what I know” habit many of us have, Gallagher’s argument hit a sensitive spot for me. He is right though. Accepting this, I decided during second nine weeks this year to go out on a limb with my writing instruction and implement some of the ideas I picked up from this book even though it meant completely overhauling my approach to teaching my focal standard for that point in the year.

For my 9th grade students, I saw value in attempting a consumer comparison review format for my students to explore potential college choices. This allowed me to bring in research (W.9-10.7 & 8) as I had them use CollegeBoard.org to identify schools they might consider attending based on a variety of search criteria. This was a fun stage because I was able to see many of them begin to seriously consider exploring the world outside of Mississippi. After collecting all of their information on a teacher-developed chart, we looked at two different consumer reviews as mentor texts. While looking at the differences between the iPhone11 and Galaxy S10 in one and Netflix, Hulu, and Amazon Prime Video in the other, students identified the purpose and audience of each text. They also identified how elements of the structure, author’s perspective, and author’s tone all helped develop the author’s purpose (RI.9-10.2, 3, 5, & 6). This information was most helpful to students as they began drafting their own articles. Many were pushed to see for the first time how writers make intentional decisions to get their point across to the readers while also keeping the readers

engaged (my English teacher soul rejoiced at every one of those moments!)

After completing an initial draft, students completed a “Plus/Delta” (+/) revision protocol in which they read through their own work side by side with one of the mentor texts annotating for what was good (+) and what could be revised or changed to improve it (). Having them work through their own writing side by side with published writing gave them an expert to model their own work after and led to much more productive and meaningful one-on-one writing conferences (not to mention efficient!!!)

Students implemented their +/- feedback into a revised draft which was taken to peer conferences before proceeding to a typed draft. Students most enjoyed the final phase of the process in which we walked through how to format their google docs like “professional” published writing with justified margins, images embedded in the text with captions, and font/spacing adjustments.

In reflecting on the whole processes, I realize that their writing still contains all of the elements of a “traditional” essay. They all mastered engaging introductions, well structured body sections which convey main points supported by evidence and fully developed with analysis, and effectively wrap up their ideas with conclusions. Isn’t that what we want all our students to be able to do?


If so, who said we have to teach students to do it in five paragraphs, and why do we still believe this?

Citations

Gallagher, K. (2011). Write Like This: Teaching Real-World Writing Through Modeling & Mentor Texts. Alexandria, VA: ASCD

STUDENT SAMPLES

UCLA vs. CCA
A competition between twin californian colleges
By Shayla Morgan, December 12



Introduction
You spent your whole life living in with your parents not dealing with the future as a whole. Well the time has come sadly you're in your last year of highschool or just now starting highschool but you're an overachiever and looking for a college to go to. Well you're looking you spot two that catches your eye UCLA and CCA. But you can't decide to choose well because they are very similar and you can't spot the pros and cons of either or.

Now like I said before these two schools are like twins to be frank can't tell the difference between the two. I mean they both involve art classes, their both in California, and their known for their good credits and high amount of people getting jobs from these schools. But even still there is still debate about what is the best school and I'm here to

Mississippi State University vs. Louisiana State University
The Bulldogs vs. The Tigers
by Isabella Adams

One of the things that teenagers seem to love to hate, making decisions. Most importantly making the best decisions. One of these decisions just as happen to be, choosing the best college. But it's crucial just to think about it? When high school is coming to an end and college searching is crawling up on a lot of students, the most difficult decision is yet to be made. Luckily, I am going to make it a little bit easier.

Chelsey is one of those students. She desires to follow her dream of becoming a doctor. This of course requires an education and investment into her dream. She wants to make sure that she is making the best decisions for her and that that she is investing her time into an effective education. However, considering that college is the foundation for life, Chelsey does not restrictively only want to get an education but she also wants to explore and have fun while in college. So, when choosing a college all of these things will most certainly go into consideration.

First up is the one and only, Mississippi State University Bulldogs. They are known by many for their love for athletics, especially football. Besides their love for athletics, MSU offer an amazing education for their students. As of 2018, MSU was ranked the 4th best school in Mississippi, according to medical programming. This would guarantee the educational and academic advances that Chelsey deserves.

Louisiana State University shares a love for athletics as well as a love for medicine. LSU has two medical health centers, one in New Orleans and another in Shreveport. Their medical organizations and programs have been highly appreciated. There medical program has been ranked 1st and 2nd in the country. The second best medical school in Louisiana. This would be very helpful to Chelsey considering how much she values her education. She will once again be getting the education she deserves to prepare for her future.

In order to determine the best school Chelsey decides to break it down into categories that mean a lot to her which

Ole Miss vs. University of Alabama
Battle of the Colleges
By Alyssa Campbell December 9, 2019

Introduction
The University of Mississippi was founded in 1848 in Oxford, Mississippi. It is the state's largest university and has been recognized as one of the nation's fastest growing schools.

Ole Miss may be a great school but how does it compare to the University of Alabama? UGA was founded in 1831 in Tuscaloosa, Alabama as the state's first public college. It is a flagship college of the state and creates an innovative campus.

Both Ole Miss and UGA are admirable institutions with recognized medical programs. They are involved in sports and many other leisurely activities students can enjoy outside of their studies. Now, you might be wondering which school really is better because they have so much in common. By looking at things such as acceptance requirements, tuition, degrees offered, and more, I can find out which university is best.

Acceptance Requirements
Knowing the standards a school sets when accepting students is important because it shows how high their expectations are. You wouldn't want to be at a school filled with people who couldn't pass high school.

Acceptance Requirements for University of Mississippi
Acceptance Requirements for University of Alabama

Learning in Action!

by Catherine Beasley

We learn best when we can learn from each other. I wanted to take a moment to highlight some of the great things going on across the district. Take a look at what teachers within your district shared about some phenomenal activities going on in their classrooms!

A Look at the Russian Revolution

Brandon High School

Jinny Bailey, 9th Grade World History teacher

When preparing for our unit on the Inter-War Years and the Rise of Dictators in World History, I came across an LDC module created by teachers in our district that allowed students to take a deeper look into the Russian Revolution. This is a topic we cover in our state standards.

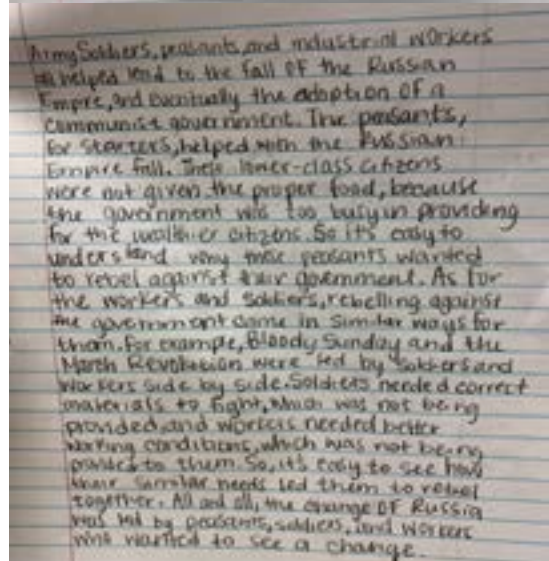
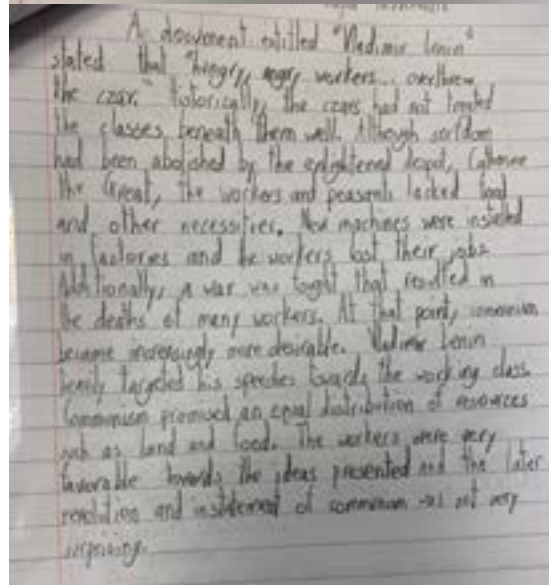
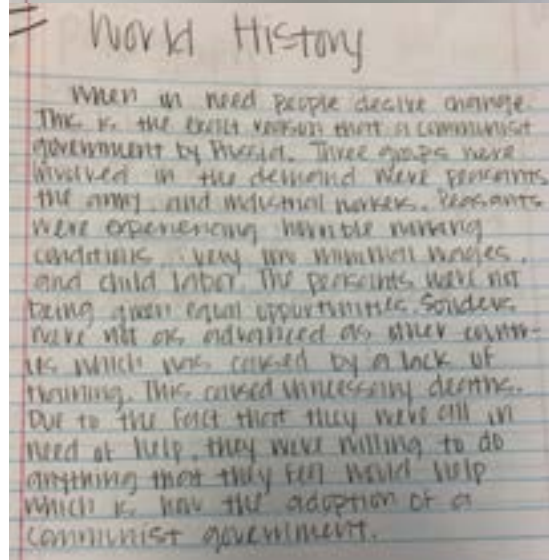
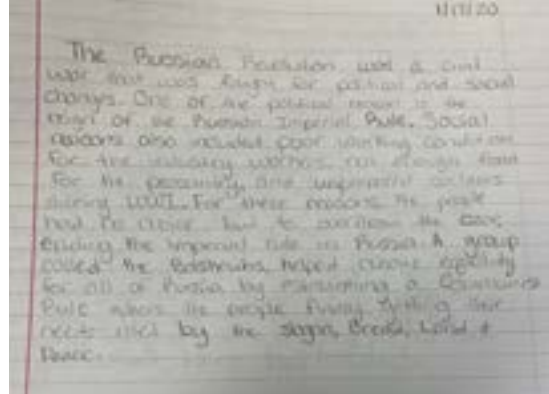
In the module, students are given the prompt, as well as sources and documents to read through to help them formulate their answer in the form of an essay. While reading through the module and planning my lessons, I decided I wanted to go a different direction than the usual essay as the final product of the assignment.

This particular module was designed to take the place of a lecture on the Russian Revolution. The task asks students to demonstrate how the unmet needs of particular people during the time period led to revolution, contributed to the fall of the Russian Empire and brought about the rise of communism in Russia. Students would get the opportunity to read and research in order to take on the role of the industrial worker, peasant, and a soldier. The idea behind the module is to help students better understand the relationships between different groups of people and why they wanted change.

As mentioned previously, usually the end product of the modules is an essay, but I wanted to try something different with my students. Instead of writing an essay, we tried out a more collaborative approach! For this activity, I had my students read and research a specific, assigned role (industrial worker, peasant, soldier) and produce a slide-show of information relating to specific overarching questions posed before reading. Once reading and research was complete, students collaborated in a triad to jigsaw information in order to hear all perspectives. Here, they became the “expert.” After hearing all sides and perspectives, students wrote a constructed response tying all of the roles together and to answer the original prompt given.

For grading purposes, each group combined the informational slide-show and submitted them on for a grade. The constructed response was turned in and students received an individual grade.

As I walked around the room, observing conversations, students were fully engaged in conversations about each of their roles. I like how this collaborative approach had the students take ownership of their work, as their fellow group members were relying on their “expertise” for information about the other two roles in order to complete



their constructed responses. I feel like the students felt this approach fed into their creative abilities, but also still allowed them to practice their writing skills. Additionally, I feel that they were not as overwhelmed with the project as they would have been writing an essay,

Life in the Trenches

WWI Lesson from Puckett High

Jennifer Parker, 9th Grade World History teacher

9th grade students at Puckett High School recently learned what life was like in the trenches during World War I. This lesson is the third lesson in our WWI unit following the four long term causes of the war and a simulation on the country alliances and precedes a lesson on specific western front battles.

When entering the classroom, students see a photograph of soldiers in a British trench during the Battle of the Somme projected onto the SmartBoard. After quietly examining the photo, students are then ready to discuss what they notice about the trench and the soldiers' conditions there. They recognize the large ditch roughly dug into the earth, the lumber used to fortify the “walls,” and the sleeping soldiers wrapped in their coats trying to rest while another soldier keeps watch. The trench looks uncomfortable, cramped, and bleak.



Did you know that the term “trench coat” originated from the coats the British officers wore in the trenches during World War I? Puckett students examine a Burberry advertisement for a British officer trench coat. The coat used special material called gabardine that is water repellant and would also keep the soldiers warm during freezing temperatures, though not too heavy to be restrictive.



I love History Channel's fast-paced and engaging videos, and the clip “Life in a Trench” is a great way to peak students' interest in trench warfare. This approximately 3 minute video shows WWI reenactments in the trenches, authentic footage, as well as multiple historians' perspectives on trench warfare. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_G4ZY66BG38&feature=youtu.be

It's the gross and unusual that students will remember, and life in the trench certainly delivers! Problems abound in the trenches from trench foot due to the persistent mud and rain water to cholera, otherwise known as death by diarrhea! Utilizing a slideshow with photos, students are made aware of the soldiers' problems during day to day living in the trenches including: disease, infection, exposure, and we can't forget the rats!



Trench Foot

The following is an excerpt from a soldier's reflection about rats which I read to my students:

“The outstanding feature of the trenches was the extraordinary number of rats. The area was infested with them. It was impossible to keep them out of the dugouts. They grew fat on the food that they pilfered from us, and anything they could pick up in or around the trenches; they were bloated and loathsome to look at. Some were nearly as big as cats. We were filled with an instinctive hatred of them, because however one tried to put the thought of one's mind, one could not help feeling that they fed on the dead.” [Stuart Dolden, 1920]

Next, students listen to a podcast entitled “Life in the Trenches.” [Listenwise]

Posted on the SmartBoard are the following questions:

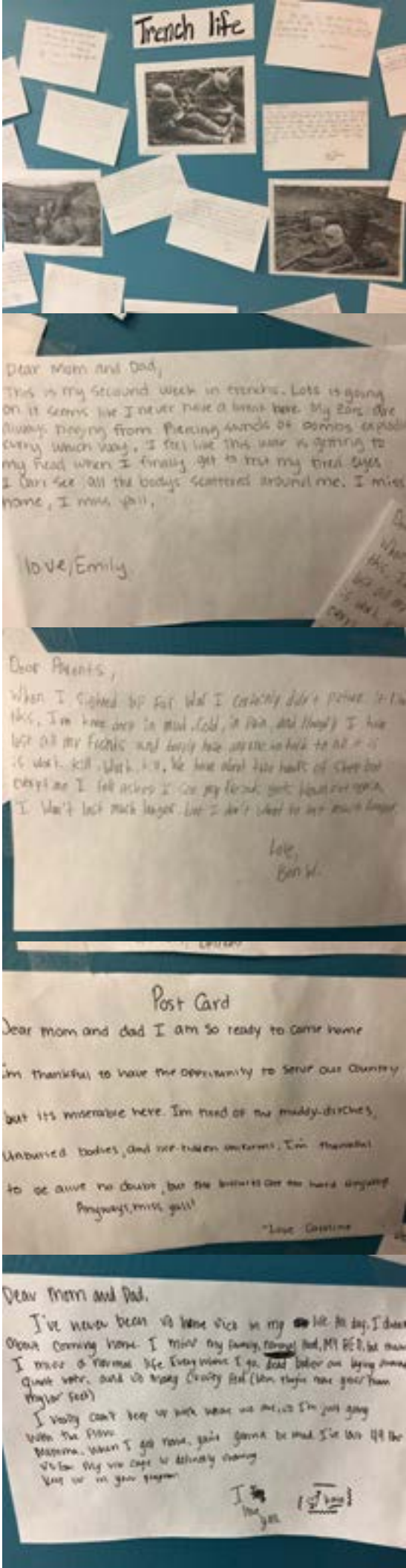
1. How does the veteran describe the gas attack?
2. Based on what you have learned about World War I so far, which aspect of trench warfare do you think was hardest on the soldiers?

The narrator of the podcast and the WWI veteran provide insight into the horrors of trench warfare, including a poison gas attack lasting 48 hours when the soldier’s protective gas mask only lasted for 24 hours!

<https://listenwise.com/teach/lessons/46-life-in-the-trenches-during-world-war-i> (3 min. 45 sec.)

By this point, students have a good understanding of life in the trench and are ready for the online interactive simulation created by the Canadian War Museum entitled “Over the Top.” This simulation allows students to make some of the same decisions in the trenches that WWI soldiers would have made. Students read, listen, think, and write about their experience as they go through the simulation. They are given a handout that walks them through their experience in the simulation where they document their choices and consequences. Students are able to personalize the simulation by including their name, a friend’s name, and their hometown. They enjoy the challenge to see if they can safely make it through the war. If they make an error, their parents will receive a letter home about their demise; if they succeed, they will receive a certificate of completion of service.

<https://www.warmuseum.ca/overthetop/game/>



Students experience the online Over the Top trench simulation.

To conclude the lesson, I read some excerpts (sample below) from WWI soldiers’ letters home telling about their life in the trench.

“The soldiers at the front need more rest. While in the trenches the water is over our knees most of the time. The war is going to last some time yet, and might be another twelve months before it is over. The war has only just begun and it’s going to be a war of exhaustion.” Private H. F. Leppard in a letter to his mother on December 19th, 1914

Finally, students pretend to be a WWI soldier and write a letter home discussing what their experience is in the trenches. They can choose to write to their parents, a friend, or loved one. For the assignment, they are to include information learned from today’s lesson -- the photos, primary source readings, video clip, podcast, and simulation -- regarding life in the trenches.

Students’ letters written from a soldier’s point of view about trench warfare:

The Gathering Table

Civil Rights Lesson from Northwest Rankin High
Amber Armstrong, Anna Lindsey Hall, Grace Mercer 11th
Grade US History

One of the most valuable ideas we can learn from the civil rights struggles of the 1950s and 1960s is that when we are able to gather to discuss issues honestly, listen to opposing viewpoints, and compromise to find solutions, our nation is able to solve problems that may seem, at first, insurmountable. In the spirit of this, your assignment requires that you research a person associated with the Civil Rights Movement -- you will identify the problems this person found in society, the solutions presented, and the impact his/her life had on the United States. As a class, we will gather together to analyze some of the problems America faced in this era and brainstorm solutions together.

Before we gather

You will need to research your assigned figure independently. You will be responsible for submitting a short essay on Canvas that outlines the following:

1. The Problem: What issue in society did your figure attempt to address? How did this issue affect this person’s life? Be specific!
2. The Solution: How did your civil rights figure propose solving the problems he/she identified? What strategies did this person use to achieve solutions? Were these strategies effective? Why or why not?
3. The Result: What lasting impact did your civil rights figure have on society? This should include specific legislation passed as well as larger changes that occurred in society as a result of this person’s legacy. In short, how is America different because this person lived?
4. You will need to find a quote from your civil rights figure that you feel best sums up his/her philosophy. Prepare to bring that quote to the gathering table. Make sure you cite the source of this quotation (when/where did this person say this?!).

This information should be included in an essay that is no less than 500 words. You will submit this essay on Canvas, and it will be checked through turnitin.com. Be sure to include a works cited page.

The Gathering Table

We will gather together and work to solve the problems of the 1950s and 1960s over a meal! The day of the gathering table, you will need to bring the following information:

1. The quote you found on your civil rights figure - you will be sharing this with the class. You must be able to explain WHY the quote you chose best explains this person’s ideas.
2. A notecard with the basics from your essay: 1) problem your figure found in society 2) solutions/strategies suggested
3. lasting impact

In class, you will be given a problem from this time period. Those seated at your table will discuss how their figure would have solved the problem. Then, as a group, you will determine which solution you believe to be most effective. This will be an assignment that you submit by the end of the class.

-This experience is one of our favorite activities throughout the year because the discussions that take place on this day have such a meaningful impact on our students.



Classroom Moves that Have an “Effect” on Student Learning

by Sheri Blankenship

Have you ever wondered if the instructional choices you are making are truly having a positive effect on student achievement? Have you ever thought something like, “Man, if I could just know what makes the most impact, then I would definitely do that?” I know I have. As teachers we plan lessons, create assessments to measure student understanding, and assess student work in order to make informed instructional decisions, and if you’ve been teaching for any length of time, you probably have an ever-growing “toolbox” of strategies, which is great, because it allows for greater versatility in your ability to design lessons that open up different pathways for students to learn in our classrooms, but wouldn’t it be nice if we could have research to support the validity of our strategy choices or even to better inform our instructional choices? Using John Hattie’s effect size research allows us to do just that.

WHAT IS AN “EFFECT SIZE”? John Hattie, an education researcher based in Australia, wanted to know not only what works in education, but what works best. Hattie and his team examined over 1,600 meta-analyses (the examination of data from multiple independent studies), encompassing 95,000 studies that looked at which variables have the greatest impact on student achievement (Corwin Visible Learning Plus).

While introducing the use of effect sizes in their book *Teaching Literacy in the Visible Learning Classroom* (Fisher et al. 2), the authors acknowledge the following:

“There is no one way to teach, or one best instructional strategy that works in all situations for all students, but there is compelling evidence for tools that can help students reach their goals...we use the effect size information that John Hattie has collected over many years to make the case that some things are more likely to be effective than others.” Based on Hattie’s copious research, he has determined that an effect size of .40 (see Figure 1 below) and greater allows “students to learn at an appropriate rate, meaning at least a year of growth for a year in school” (Fisher et. al 2). What, then, are the highest ranking leverage points for us to consider when thinking about creating an effective environment in our classrooms for students to learn and when planning instructional experiences for our students?

HIGH OR LOW EFFECT SIZE? WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS? Let’s consider a few common factors that come up frequently in educational conversations and see if the research bears out that the amount of energy we expend on these influences is where we can be having the most effect.

Influence on Student Achievement	Effect Size	High or Low	Things to Consider
Feedback	.75	HIGH	It is probably not surprising that this influence has a high effect size. Regular, ongoing feedback that is specific so that the learner is able to pinpoint where he or she is currently and to be able to determine how to move forward to improve is invaluable. Effective feedback can come from the teacher, peers, and even students themselves as they self-reflect when they know the expected criteria.
Reducing Class Size	.21	LOW	This influence is often heavily debated by teachers and administrators, so it may be surprising that it has a low effect size on student achievement. This does not mean that it does not require innovative thinking on how to bring effective classroom instruction to a larger class size but rather that this influence alone does not ensure maximum student achievement.
Teacher Clarity	.75	HIGH	Teacher clarity is another influence that can make a huge difference! This is why the research so strongly supports the idea of Learning Targets/Intentions. When the teacher is clear exactly what is intended for the outcome of the lesson, his or her planning becomes more laser-focused, and students are able to be partners in their learning because they understand where they are going in the lesson.
Teaching Test Taking	.30	LOW	While it is necessary at times to help students have practice in what types of questions they might encounter on a test or to help them practice building endurance for a longer testing situation, teaching directly to a test as the primary means of conducting class is not shown to produce the strongest student achievement.
Teacher Estimates of Achievement	1.29	HIGH	So... this particular influence is almost off the charts high! How very high this influence ranks is often surprising to teachers, but really, I am not so sure it should be when you really think about it. What we truly believe about what our students are able to do while in our classes actually permeates all of our planning and our every interaction with our students. If, deep down, we really don’t think our students can meet the level of the standards, we will plan instruction that lowers the bar, we will often plan assessments that are not meeting the standards, etc. because of this belief. Often, this is completely unintentional, and we would probably admit that it is mostly because we do not want to see our students struggle or fail, but when we do not fully believe that they can, we shortchange them the opportunity to build rungs on their own educational ladders to climb to where they CAN be!

Obviously, with most of these influences, this does not mean there is never a case for teaching with PowerPoint because it has a lower effect size (.26) or for helping students develop study skills because, while its effect size is above .40, it is only .46. Rather, it is the idea that these things that have lower effect sizes, when used, should certainly be used in conjunction with influences that DO have a high impact. Additionally, it is the idea that when we are selecting from our toolbox of strategies and influences while planning instruction or the setup of the environment of our classrooms, that we have this research to help us think through what moves students forward the most effectively so we can make more informed choices. For more information about Hattie’s research or the influences themselves, click this link. Ultimately, this research has the potential to lead to some really great conversations with our colleagues about how to best use this information to validate parts of our own current practice along with the opportunity to grow in our thinking as well.

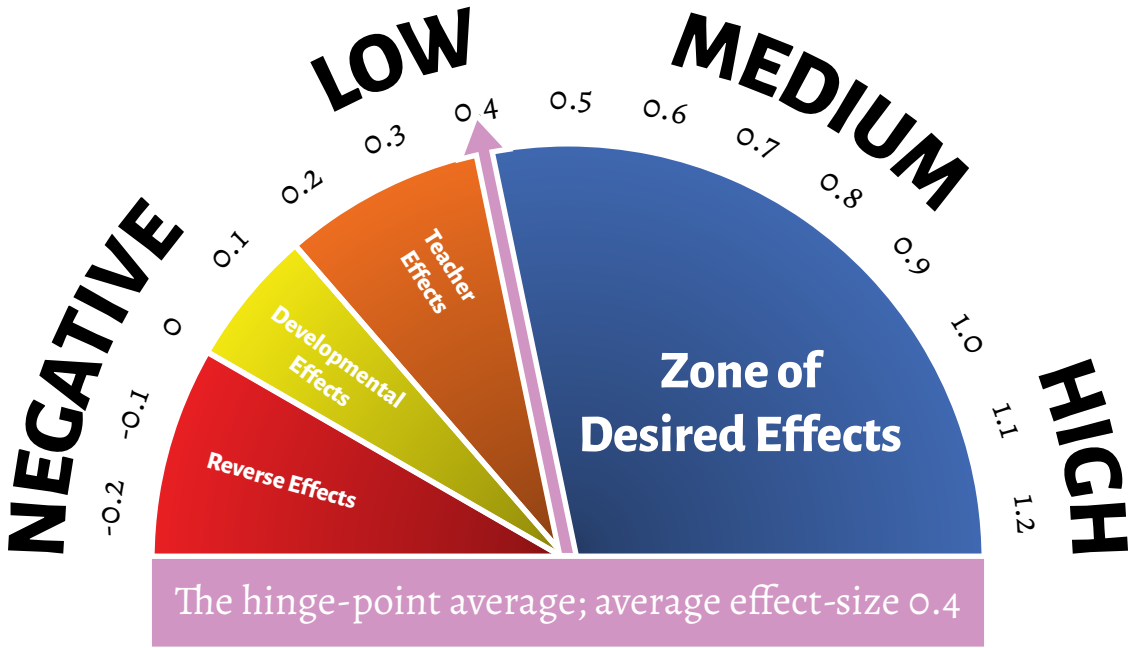


Figure 1. Source: www.vms.edu/influences-learning-what-works-and-what-doesnt

the Art of Teaching

Secondary students in Rankin County schools were invited to submit artworks that reflected the theme: Our Mississippi.

We were inspired by Hometown Rankin Magazine. This past fall the magazine held a student art competition. The winners would have their artworks printed in the magazine for December. We thought, what a great idea! Rankin County School District should have our own contest! After all, our students are some of the most creative students anywhere!

We decided the theme would be: Our Mississippi. Students had to create an individual artwork that was 2D (or flat) and was indeed their own art (no tracing). This way, you could see the talent that our students possess.

We had entries from both Middle Schools and High Schools throughout the district. The submissions we received were amazing! The level of creativity in our students is outstanding. The entries included art that represented the foods of Mississippi, the culture of Mississippi, and the people and places around our wonderful state! The cover design is the overall winning submission, and you will find other winning entries as well. We had so many entries, we simply could not put them all in our magazine!

We do hope you enjoy the winning student artworks that were chosen for the magazine.



Hadley Palmer
Brandon High School

My name is Hadley Palmer and I am a freshman and Brandon High School. I have lived all of my life in Brandon with my parents Chris and Allison Palmer and my siblings Hali and Hayden. Together we attend First Baptist Church of Brandon.

I have always enjoyed art and I won my first art competition in kindergarten when my teacher submitted my drawing of a circus tiger to the Mid-south Association of Independent Schools Visual Arts competition. Since then I have been blessed with wonderful art teachers at the RCSD who have encouraged me to create and who have helped me to enter several contest over the years. Some of my accomplishments include winner for my age group in the 2017 MS Art Education Association Youth Artist Month contest and placing 2nd in the 2018 Junior Auxiliary of Rankin County art contest. In 2019 I had the honor of having a drawing of a Christmas Tree published in the December 2019 edition of Hometown Rankin Magazine and a poem published in the 2019 Creative Communication's poetry anthology.

In addition to the art classes that I take at Brandon High School, this year will be my second year in a row to attend the Janice Wyatt Mississippi Summer Arts Institute at Delta State University. I enjoy creating art and my dream is to one day become a professional artist. While I enjoy exploring all of the different art mediums that are offered at my school, watercolor is my favourite.



Jamie Ferreras
Northwest Rankin High School

Hello! I am Jamie Esmeralda Ferreras, currently a senior at Northwest Rankin High School. I was born in Georgia but raised by my parents who emigrated from Guatemala and Dominican Republic. Growing up, I identified closely with my roots. Therefore, it comes as no surprise when I use them to inspire my creations. One culturally-inspired art piece earned 1st place overall in Mississippi's Youth Art Month Flag Contest. My background also drives me academically. Graduating high school will make me the first in my family to reach this milestone. Furthermore, I plan to pursue a career in Architecture, influenced by my mother who is a contractor, but more notably for my interest in design. I find myself to be an energetic person so I confide in a variety of sports. I play soccer, run track & field, and cross country. I am actively involved with the community by volunteering at Mississippi's Childrens' Museum. The museum offers a lively, almost chaotic environment that resonates well with my personality type. My personality likes to find order in chaos which enhances my leadership abilities. I am Vice President of the National Art Honor Society and won the State Competition for DECA. I'm also part of Mu Alpha Theta, the Multicultural Club, and FCCLA. In my leisure time I enjoy walking my cat, Toby. (He secretly thinks he's a dog) I like to visit the dog park with my two dogs, Roxie and Lola, as well. Dancing is a great part of being hispanic so I do it like nobody's watching. Reading and watching YouTube winds me down but can also enrich the mind. And of course, drawing is the ultimate escape from reality that I delve into as much as possible. It is, along with several other things, who I am.



Chloe Eastering
Northwest Rankin High School

I was born and raised in Brandon Mississippi and live with my beloved parents and older brother. I've been drawing for as long as I can remember and it's one of my longest lasting passions. I love the freedom of expression that I have with art and I hope to continue it as time goes on.



Aubrey McLellan
Northwest Rankin High School

My name is Aubrey McLellan, and I'm a sophomore at Northwest Rankin High School. I am the middle child, and only daughter, in a family of five. Some of my accomplishments this year include having one of my ceramic pieces chosen to be put in the Chimneyville festival this past December. I made an otter that is partially raised out of the water. Another accomplishment was entering a drawing that had the theme of winter put into the Rankin County magazine for the month of December. Although it didn't win the cover, it was still a big deal to see it in the magazine. As of right now, I am not sure what I plan to do in the future. I have an interest in psychology and graphic design/art, so I may choose to go into those fields when the time comes.

Mississippi Department of Archives & History Field Trips

by Catherine Beasley

Many thanks to the Mississippi Department of Archives and History for providing our teachers and students with an amazing opportunity to experience history. Our teachers and students have taken advantage of the opportunities that are available right around the corner!

The Day at the Museum series allows students the opportunity to visit the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum, Mississippi History Museum and the Old Capitol Museum. Through a grant with the Kellogg Foundation and Cline Tours, MDAH is able to provide scholarships for admission and transportation to the museums.

If you are interested in these experiences, please contact Catherine Beasley (catherine.beasley@rcsd.ms) or Stephanie King (sking@mdah.ms.gov)

A Day at the Museums

Florence Middle School
Carlous Smith, Mississippi Studies

Florence Middle School students in Mr. Smith's Mississippi Studies course took advantage of this scholarship to immerse the students in local history for the day.

All three museums have teacher resources available on Archives & History website that include a printable scavenger hunt that will allow the students to search around the different areas with purpose. Prior to going with the students I toured the museums myself to customize the material for our needs.

I took my students at a midpoint in the semester because this allows for instruction of the formative years and through Reconstruction in Mississippi. The Old Capitol solidifies those early years with details of

government and the historical nature of the building. At the History Museum they see the early years but also are going to be exposed to events that have not been covered yet and can begin to look forward. The Civil Rights Museum is something that we have not covered, however it begins with Reconstruction and the massive changes in Mississippi. The powerful images that the students entice the students' curiosity for the second half of the semester. Once students return from the museum experience I have found the depth of both their curiosity and desire to study Civil Rights greatly increased.

I believe for any Mississippi Studies Teacher, a visit to our 2 Mississippi Museums is a must. It is as I quote Governor William Winter "Mississippi's largest history classroom."

Brandon High School
Jennifer Toth ~ US History



Brandon High School students in Mrs. Toth's US History class also took advantage of this scholarship to allow students to really see the history of Mississippi and a deep dive into Civil Rights. Her US History class will focus on Civil Rights very soon.

I think the museum experience allowed my students to connect history from Reconstruction to the present day, which is the specific content that we stress in my class. Throughout the trip, they saw examples of artifacts of how people lived so it made the history we study in class more real for them and easier to connect the past with the present. During our visit, my students were able to hear from a museum volunteer who told them about his experiences with Freedom Riders in Mississippi. They were able to listen to first-hand experiences from Mr.



Hezekiah Watkins, a Civil Rights Movement veteran. Being able to hear these first-hand accounts was so impactful on my students.

Court on the Road

The Court on the Road program is led by the Mississippi Court of Appeals. The court travels to various sites across the state. This is the first time the Court on the Road has been held on the MDAH campus. The program was held in the historic House Chamber at the Old Capitol Museum, the city's oldest building and home to the seat of the Mississippi government from 1839-1903. Court on the Road is designed to help educate students about the judicial system and appeals court proceedings. During this experience, teachers and students were able to visit the Old Capitol Museum and view actual appellate court proceedings.

The Court of Appeals hears cases assigned to them by the Supreme Court. This is an error correction court, as it hears and decides appeals on issues in which the law is already settled, but the facts are in dispute. The Court of Appeals was created by the Mississippi Legislature to help relieve a backlog of cases of the Supreme Court. This court began hearing appeals in 1995. Judges in this court are elected from five districts and serve eight-year terms. The Court of Appeals hears cases from all over the state.

Students from Pelahatchie High School and Puckett High School AP Government classes were able to experience the appeals court proceedings in an actual case, as well as ask questions to the presiding judges and lawyers in the case.

Pelahatchie High School ~ Donna McMillian
AP Government and Politics

I'm so excited that my students had the opportunity to participate in the Court on the Road program. The program consisted of an actual court proceeding of a current case that was argued before the MS Court of Appeals. In preparation for our visit, I explained the different levels of courts within our judicial system and we discussed the difference between criminal cases and civil cases. This particular case was a criminal case. We were able to view the appellant brief as well as the Attorney General's brief a couple days before going to the appeals court. This allowed us to become familiar with the arguments of each side. My students were fascinated with the entire experience. Being able to witness the proceeding first hand, was a true learning experience. Not only were they exposed to the court procedures, but they also were allowed to ask the lawyers and the three judges questions. This was truly an amazing experience that definitely made an impression on all of my students. This type of experience could change the lives of students by encouraging them to seek a profession in law.

Puckett High School ~ Chase Courtney

AP Government and Politics

Our students thoroughly enjoyed the experience. AP Government curriculum is loaded with all things judiciary and a great deal of case content, so students being able to see the second most powerful court in the State deal with a real high stakes case was a phenomenal learning experience and teaching tool. Students were engaged and really took an interest in the case. Students offered rich insight and theories from different perspectives with the majority arriving at the same conclusion. We actually got an email from another teacher about how excited two of the students were to share the experience with that teacher.

I feel like this was the most beneficial field trip that I have participated in since becoming an educator.

Finding out about the FBI

A Field Trip

Jack Phillips at Florence High School

The students in Mr. Phillips Law-Related course at Florence High School recently took a field trip to the FBI in Jackson, MS. The students were able to meet with the Special Agent in Charge of the Jackson branch, as well as one of the Assistant Special Agents in Charge over Terrorism and Counter-terrorism. The agents discussed with the students the various ways to join the FBI as an agent after college or as a support personnel, after receiving an associates degree. Other special agents spoke with us about cyber crime.

The students, then, got to tour parts of the FBI building and meet one of the SWAT team members. Students were able to see all the SWAT equipment and learned how each piece was used. We also got to see and GET IN their armored personnel carrier

It was such a wonderful experience!





Brandon
Florence
McLaurin
Northwest
Pelahatchie
Pisgah
Puckett
Richland

**Rankin
County
School
District**

TRADITION OF EXCELLENCE