

An Inspirational Message from Elizabeth Santamour

2022 Burroughs Wellcome Fund Sandhills Region Teacher of the Year



New Year, New You...Right?! WRONG!

As we celebrate the New Year, many people vow to make changes and improvements to their lives. As educators we don't have to wait for a set day to make adjustments and level up who we are. When I first began my teaching career, I remember many times that I held on to procedures or practices that needed to be refined or changed. Sometimes we find an exciting new idea that we want to implement and then discover that it just does not fit into our routine or learning space. Rather than hold on to this despite knowing it is not working, we need to be aware that we are allowed to make changes at any point.

When I taught third grade, I distinctly remember making a beautiful lunch choice display. It included magnetic numbers that were assigned to each student and they used their number magnet to show what they

wanted for lunch. Each morning my students moved their number to their lunch choice. I modeled how to do it, and the set up was organized and super cute! The first day it went smoothly. Then the second day a student could not find their number. The third day a student moved a classmate's number to a different choice. I let this go on and on, each morning having to devote attention to helping my students sort out their lunch choice when it was supposed to be an independent task. Why did I do this? Simply because I was afraid to change a routine I had put in place. I did end up changing it, but I allowed it to go on for too long. My mornings became substantially smoother with a quick adjustment. My students were fine, and I was better off. This was the first of many times I had to make changes to ensure I was creating an environment that worked for my students and myself.

In my personal life, the biggest moments that changed my trajectory did not happen on January 1st. They happened on a random Tuesday. The same is true for us as teachers. The moments that help shape our career and our success happen along the way not on a set calendar day. I encourage you to embrace what works for you as an educator. Below you will find three tips that I wish I was given in my first few years of teaching.

Be reflective

Being an educator is a busy career. Setting aside time to reflect may be a challenge. Reflection does not have to be a set scheduled time with a pen and paper. Reflection can take place during a conversation with a colleague, while observing students engaging in a classroom routine, or during your morning commute. The point is to take time to think about how it is really going within your classroom environment and reflect on ways in which you can improve for you and your students.

Ask for another set of eyes

Sometimes it is difficult to see or acknowledge what is not working within our classroom. On many (and I mean, many!) occasions I have asked colleagues to take a look at a certain procedure or approach I am



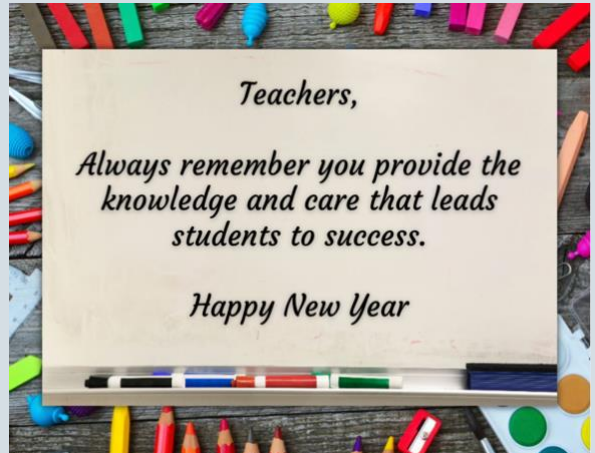
using to help me make improvements. I am in my eleventh year and I still do this! When we are in a situation despite knowing it is not working, finding the solution or root of the problem may not be easy. Allowing someone else to support you in doing so is truly impactful. It also provides us a perspective different from our own which often helps lead to progress.

Do what is right for you and your students

We teach in an age of social media and Pinterest classrooms. I have watched many videos, read blogs or scrolled through Pinterest and found myself feeling inadequate. The truth of the matter is if you are doing what is right for you and your students, then all of those posts, fancy classroom hacks, and procedures do not matter. Create a space you love to teach in and that allows your students to learn and feel comfortable. No two teachers are alike so what works for one may not work for another. Finding who you are as an educator does not happen overnight, but I assure you it happens!

I hope that 2023 is filled with so much joy, learning and growth for you and your students. Remember to give yourself grace and adjust as you see a need.

Keep making a difference!



NC Beginning Teacher Professional Development Corner



ELA Newsletter

In this month's BT PD Corner check out the helpful resources on academic language and vocabulary for elementary and secondary grades in the December ELA Newsletter provided by the NCDPI ELA Consultants.

Upcoming Twitter Chat

Mark your calendar and join educators state-wide on February 16th at 7pm for our North Carolina Beginning Teacher Twitter Chat. Login to your Twitter account and follow hashtag #NCBTChat to participate.