



Superintendent Update: January 10, 2014

Quote for the week: “A man is not old until his regrets take the place of dreams.”—John Barrymore

The snow days have given me time in the office to catch up on some professional reading. *Causes and Cures in the Classroom* by Margaret Searle has given me insight into opportunities we have as educators and parents to get to the root causes of academic and behavioral programs. With a light schedule of activities due to the snow, I would like to use the opportunity to share with our readers some of those insights from the book.

In the concluding chapter, Searle offers tips for parents and educators to support students with some of the issues in poor performance. The encouragement to all of us is to guide and support students as opposed to labeling or punishing them.

Concerns about poor planning and problem solving, weak memory, disorganization, inability to focus attention, impulsiveness, and poor self-monitoring can be a problem for students of any age. Typically, these issues become increasingly problematic around 4<sup>th</sup> grade, when expectations for independence go up just as the tight structure of early grades is lowered. In middle grades and high school, academic demands increase as adult support decreases, and students with weak executive (planning and organization) skills experience growing frustration, even when their academic ability is solid.

Parents and teachers can reduce their own frustrations and those of the students by understanding that what appear to be laziness and lack of motivation are often an extreme need for support and guidance. Students with executive dysfunctions tend not to learn from previous experiences because they don't make cause-and-effect connections well, nor do they use feedback to adjust their plan of action. Saying things like “How many times have I told you not do that?” or “We have been over and over this” or “I know you can do this because I've seen you do it before” only makes matters worse.

These students need targeted interventions. Designing these intervention plans requires careful diagnosis as well as knowledge of research-based-strategies. Because some students require more of our time, energy and guidance than others do, we must keep in mind that “fair” does not always mean “equal.”

If we had the job of caring for a cactus, a violet, and a water lily, what would we do ensure the growth of each? We would give each plant what it needs: more or less light, different types of soil, more or less water. With plants, it is obvious that a one-size-fits-all approach would be irresponsible. Sometimes it is harder to see that students have this same variety of needs. Assuming that the same level of support will work for all students is naïve. It is also shortsighted to think that adults can make plans work effectively without buy-in from the student.



Students with executive dysfunctions often turn out to be amazingly successful adults, but they need strong support to learn to regulate and compensate for the delay of efficient firing in their brains. Trying their best won't be enough to get the job done. They need help jump-starting their processes. Once these new patterns of thinking become automatic, the positive results will reinforce their efforts and keep them growing.

The dream most of us went into teaching with was to make a significant difference for our students. The way to do that has nothing to do with quick fixes or canned programs. It has to do with teachers who genuinely care and are always looking for better ways to help students help themselves.

### **News for the week:**



Our noon school board meeting at Mountain Home High School on January 8<sup>th</sup> was both fun and enlightening. The EAST students gave presentations of the different projects they are working on. Students served lunch. Thanks to Mrs. Brown and MHHS for hosting the noon board meeting.

I serve on two state wide committees and enjoyed my Thursday in Little Rock to be of service at the state level. One committee is the Arkansas Center for Executive Leadership (ACEL). This is exciting work as we plan activities and opportunities for Arkansas principals and superintendents which will prepare them for effective executive leadership in our state. The other committee is with the Arkansas Activities Association. This committee is attempting to suggest a way to reduce the travel to athletic events for not only Mountain Home, but other schools in the state which travel longer distances than what would be considered reasonable. This is difficult work and the solution will not be one which solves every problem we and other schools have. I am hopeful this committee will come up with a plan which will be supported by enough schools in the state to at least improve from where we are now. It is too early to suggest we will have change, but I am hopeful.

Lonnie

## Teacher Center Update from Mark Gipson January 10, 2014

### **Program Updates:**

**AIMM:** Arkansas Mentoring Program provides mentoring for novice teachers and beginning administrators. The program has been updated to include the philosophy and components of TESS (Teacher Excellence Support System). The change requires new mentors to be trained and experienced mentors to be retrained. The training will be available in the spring.

- 1 day (6 hour)
- Up to 40 mentors may be trained in each 6 hour session (numbers will depend on the availability of computers in training room)
- 2 trainers are required for each training session
- Mentors will still receive a \$1200 per year/\$600 per semester stipend just as they did with Pathwise

### **TESS/LEADS:**

- Administrators are advised to secure copies of the credential certificate proving that he/she has passed the TESS test
- ADE will share how to secure TESS testing accounts for new administrators
- Contact Ivy Pfeffer [ivy.pfeffer@arkansas.gov](mailto:ivy.pfeffer@arkansas.gov) if you have an administrator who failed to complete testing before Dec. 31, 2013
- The TESS training on AR Ideas is scheduled to expire at the end of May 2014
- Meetings are in progress on how secure training module availability for district access for novice teachers
- ADE will offer optional **Coaching for Administrators for TESS**. It will be a follow up to the Coaching offered in Fall 2013
- ADE is developing a **Data Literacy** training to assist teachers and administrators in understanding how the growth scores will be used and how they will contribute to all teachers'/administrators' TESS rating beginning 2015-16
- ADE is contracting with a software vendor for TESS. All teachers and administrators will receive 2 to 3 hours of in-service in 2014 on the software
- Districts will also have a software "Super User" to customize the TESS input software for the district. That will be an additional training, more extensive
- NAESC will offer training for teachers on TESS Components as needed

### **Academic Initiatives:**

#### **Dyslexia**

- The rules are not out at this time the rules will go to state board in February
- Cooperative staff will receive dyslexia training in April
- No details are available at this time regarding implementation of the law

- ADE has stated that all teachers will have to have professional development in *Dyslexia Professional Awareness*; for summer 2014 it will be available on AR Ideas
- On AR Ideas there will be a facilitator guide/resource guide with the training

**LDC/MDC** registration will end March 21. Watch for a Com. Memo with registration forms and details

**Foreign Language Standards** were approved by the State Board of Education

**Library Media Frameworks** will go to board in March.

Teachers who worked on updating frameworks will provide professional development on them. Cooperatives will set up the trainings when the offerings are made available (summer 2014)

**Science:** Next Generation Standards have not been taken to the state board and ADE does not know when they will be presented.

**Research Strategies for Literacy Teachers:** Professional Development is being developed for teachers in the following grade level bands K-2, 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12. The courses will be taught by Cooperative Specialists and will be available summer 2014.

**Disciplinary Literacy Strategies for Content Area Teachers** for Science and Social Studies teachers will continue to be offered.

**Teacher Cadet Program:** Three Arkansas districts are piloting this program in Arkansas. Southside High School is one of the pilot schools. The program offers concurrent credit (teacher has to be certified as always for offering concurrent credit). Funds in future may be funneled to these cadets for loan forgiveness from college course work.

## ***Policy and Processes***

### **Course Codes:**

- **January 29, CIV on Course Approvals** will be presented by Tommy Coy and Tracy Tucker. The focus will be on the Course Code Management System
- Digital Course Codes will use existing codes
- When the digital course is set up in APSCN, a clickable window should be checked indicating “Digital”
- A yes/no indicator will be present on the transcript indicating whether the digital course has been taken

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