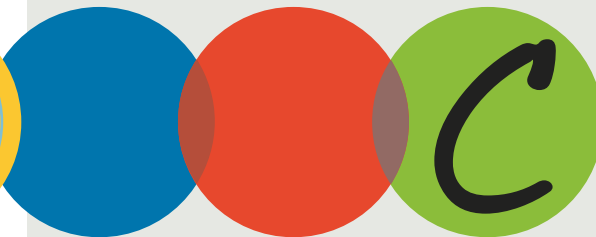
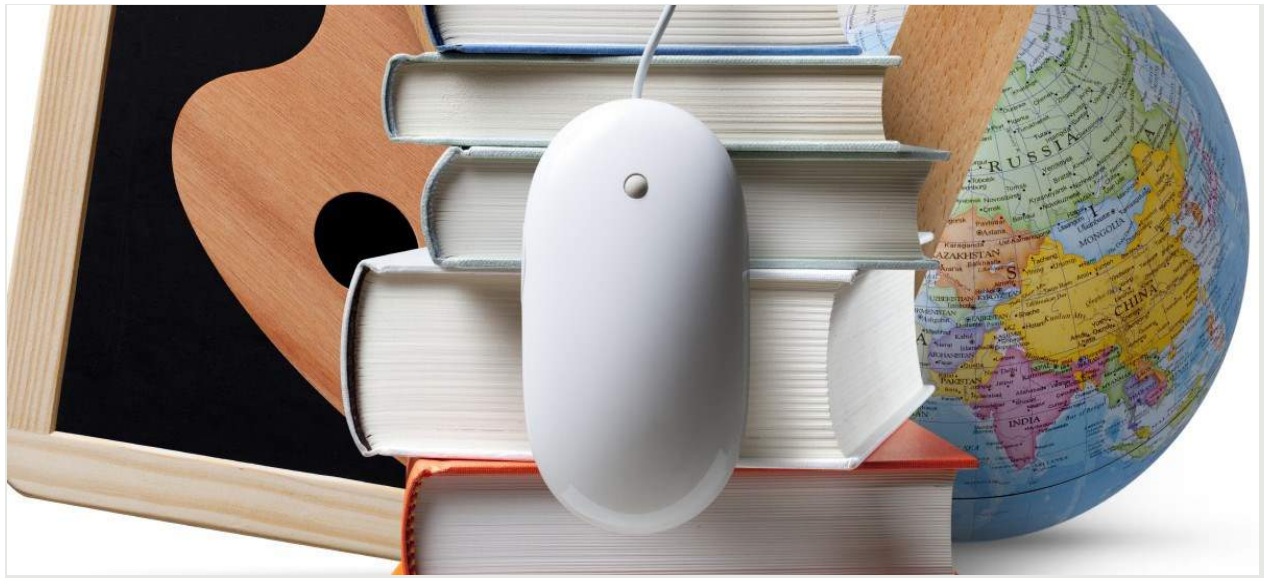


A monthly
newsletter
filled with practical,
research-based
articles for K-12
educators across the
North American
Division



the **crae** Connection

A Note from the Editor



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Several years ago, when I was the principal at a K-8 Adventist school in southern California, we began a school-wide project during the month of December. All classes were challenged to raise money during the weeks leading up to Christmas break and then shop the ADRA gift catalog for items that they would be purchasing for individuals/families in need. (For those of you unfamiliar with the ADRA gift catalog, it is a print – and digital – publication that ADRA publishes during the holiday season. But rather than toys or clothing or other such items found in regular catalogs, this catalog features things people and communities desperately need and can use to help make a living. This year, for instance, one listed gift is a beehive. For \$125, one hive can add to a family's beekeeping business, which contributes significantly to the household income. Another example is a \$35 gift that will provide meals for the elderly.) The project was a huge success; students brought in money by searching for loose change under couches, mowing lawns and hitting up their grandparents. Teachers told me that their students would spend free time in class, flipping through the pages of the catalog, studying each gift carefully, and debating the merits of purchasing a flock of chickens versus a kitchen stove.

As you'll read in this month's *Connection*, there is much that can be said – and done! – to turn our hearts and minds outside of ourselves and to *give* to others – gifts of time, resources or talents. Compassion, empathy, connectedness, gratitude – these are all traits that we want to carefully cultivate in our students year-round, but especially during the holiday season.

I don't remember the specific gifts that our school ended up purchasing, but I do remember the spirit of giving that permeated our campus that December.

Blessings to you as you finish out this first half of the school year. May this holiday season bring you joy, peace and reminders of Christ everywhere you look.



The Chalkboard: notes for the elementary educator

Cultivating Compassion

Compassion – along with character and altruism and empathy – have become hot topics in education. A recent viral blog post made the case for *empathy* – or lack thereof – being at the heart of the epidemic of school shootings – not gun control, mental health, white entitlement or racism. (<http://markmanson.net/school-shootings>) Blogger Mark Manson urged readers to connect more intentionally, to listen more carefully, and to reach out to those in need. While still acknowledging the other factors and recognizing that there are certainly deep, profound issues involved with each situation, a strong argument can nevertheless be made for the importance of cultivating compassion within our students.

That argument is made even stronger through a recent research study (<http://pss.sagepub.com/content/24/7/1171.full.pdf+html>) that strongly suggests compassion can be *trained* and *learned*. Researchers at the University of Wisconsin-Madison asked participants in their study to systematically practice compassion – on themselves, on others and then on complete strangers. They found that by engaging in compassionate acts regularly, participants were primed to be more compassionate after the study. Those who received this “compassion training” actually *became* more altruistic – as evidenced not only through their acts, but also in MRI scans that showed more brain activity within the inferior parietal cortex, the region in the brain associated with empathy and understanding of others.

So if compassion is an important trait to possess, and if through intentional training and effort, one can *become* more compassionate, then it would stand to reason that schools – where children spend much of their day, where teachers have a captive audience, where the peer effect is so strong and present – serve as the perfect place to cultivate compassion.

And how awesome that Adventist educators have a slight advantage! *Not* because we are naturally more compassionate and *not* because our students are kinder or more giving by default, but because our philosophy of Adventist education uses compassion – Christ-led, service-oriented, mission-filled compassion – as its framework.

We’d encourage you to continue incorporating compassion into your curriculum and inspiring your students to think and act for Him and for others.





The Locker Room: notes for the academy educator

Don't Worry, Be Thankful

The fall décor has been taken down in our local mall, a cutout of Frosty the Snowman smiles down from every traffic light in town, and seemingly all radio stations switched to Christmas tunes at midnight on Thanksgiving. It appears as if that holiday is indeed done and over with for another year.

But we know, of course, that the feelings of thankfulness and gratitude should not take place only one day a week or one holiday a year. As educators, we strive to teach our students to never take things for granted, to acknowledge blessings and to develop a grateful attitude.

But did you know that there is also solid research to back the benefits of thankfulness? More than just an important trait to cultivate, the act of feeling grateful has been shown to have positive effects on both the mind and the body.

Dr. P. Murali Doraiswamy, head of biologic psychology at Duke University Medical Center noted, "If [thankfulness] were a drug, it would be the world's best-selling product with a health maintenance indication for every major organ system." What a powerful statement! Studies have shown that keeping a gratitude journal results in improvements in exercise patterns, feelings of optimism, sleep and physical ailments. (<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/prefrontal-nudity/201211/the-grateful-brain>) Another recent study conducted through UC Berkeley has provided more insight on gratitude through fMRIs taken of "grateful brains". The scans taken

while people were feeling actively grateful showed increased activity in the anterior cingulate cortex and the medial prefrontal cortex – both regions that are associated with interpersonal bonding, rewarding social interactions and empathy. (http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/what_does_a_grateful_brain_look_like)

Gratitude, therefore, is not a simple emotion; it is one that involves connection and perspective and is clearly an "emotional muscle" worth flexing.

Some ideas to foster gratitude in your classroom:

Be intentional. Like any other habit, cultivating an attitude of thanksgiving takes intention and effort. Whether it's through a gratitude journal that students keep in your class, a gratitude bulletin board, or just spending five minutes at the end of every period to discuss positive things that happened that day – be intentional!

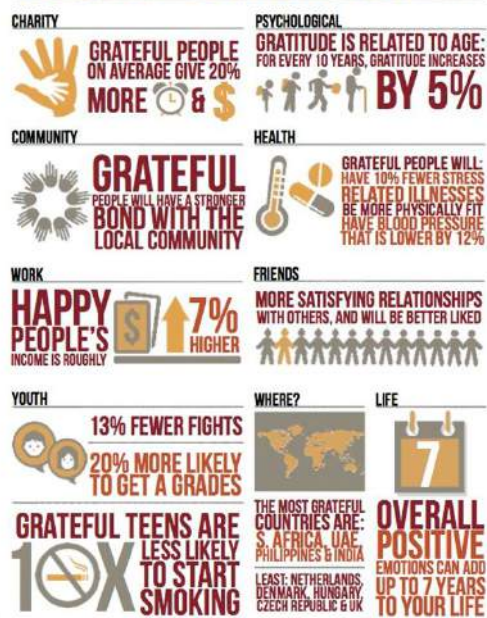
Expand. Ask a child what they're thankful for and they will most likely rattle off a list that might include family, friends and food. But high school students can and should be pushed beyond that; rather than allowing for quick – albeit true – responses, ask students to be more specific or to expand on what being thankful for family really means.

Write. There is something powerful, something sacred about the written word. Create an assignment that encourages students to write letters of thankfulness to people in their lives

who have positively influenced them. Steven Toepfer, an educator at Kent State University in Salem, OR, had students in his courses write one letter every two weeks in one quarter. "the more thank-you letters they wrote, the better they felt." (<http://www.thehighcalling.org/articles/essay/dont-worry-be-thankful-14-happy-ways-teach-kids-be-grateful>)

Thanksgiving is not just a season! Continue developing thankful hearts in each of your students and reap the full benefits of the healthful, positive act of thanksgiving

WHAT GOOD IS GRATITUDE? REASONS WHY IT'S BETTER TO LIVE GRATEFULLY



The Bulletin Board:

notes for the whole community

Your Words

From November's issue:

"This year, I am thankful that our constituent church, Arlington Seventh-day Adventist Church, shared their GOD encounters speaker with our school, Burton Adventist Academy, for Week Of Prayer. Dr. Steve Case held a week of prayer for our students, PreK-12, on Finding Jesus in the Book of Revelation. Our students were engaged in his presentations the entire week. The talks on Jesus in Revelation have sparked interest as well as conversations among students and staff. We have many International Students who requested Bible Studies as well as Baptism following the Week of Prayer. Several students are looking forward to creating small study groups as well. Our entire campus was enriched spiritually. We are very thankful that we had the opportunity to have Dr. Case for our Week of Prayer. None of it would have been possible if our church had not shared their speaker and we are grateful to our church and blessed to partner with them."

Darlene White, MS, MPH
Principal
Burton Adventist Academy

Thankful



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The Desk

notes for the administrator

AACE: Gifts to Our Administrators

Principals, we know that we have shared Ambassadors for Adventist Christian Education (AACE) with you before, but in the midst of this busy season, we wanted to take a moment to highlight once more the *gift* that an Ambassador can be to you and your school!

AACE is a new organization that was launched through the Center for Research on K-12 Adventist Education, specifically designed to recruit, organize and support volunteers for the K-12 Adventist educational system.

AACE works by:

1.) Identifying individuals across the country with a passion for Adventist education and a specific skillset that can be used to help a school (graphic/web design, marketing expertise, school board consultation, etc)

2.) adding these Ambassadors to the AACE database

3.) matching Ambassadors to schools with needs that correspond with the Ambassadors' area of expertise

While AACE personnel have been working to fill out the database with willing volunteers and are heartened by the response we have received on that end, we are also concurrently looking for schools who would like to partner with AACE to receive support from an Ambassador in a specific area.

Please take a look at our website – aace.lasierra.edu – and check out the information that we have there. If you are interested in collaborating with AACE, please fill out and submit a School Request form so that we can begin our work together! For more information, call 951-785-2997.

