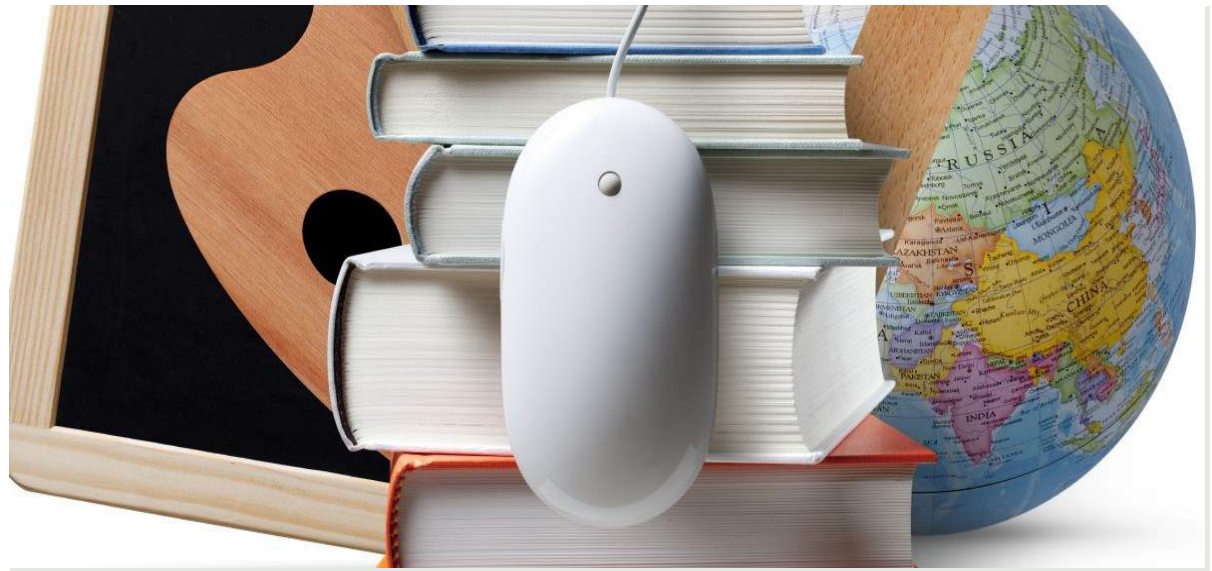


A monthly newsletter
filled with practical,
research-based
articles for K-12
educators across the
North American
Division



April
2015

the **crae**
Connection



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A Note from the Editor

A couple of years ago, some close friends convinced me to sign up with them for a 10K race. Even though I hadn't run more than a mile since high school, I was game. One race turned into three – and I eventually ended up running a marathon relay (not to be confused with a full marathon!) and two 10Ks. My husband shook his head with exasperation as I signed up for each race – with entrance fees ranging from \$50-\$100. "Why," he wondered out loud, "must we pay for something that you could do for free on your own time?" As I participated in each race, I tried to articulate to him the thrill of the crowds, the surge of adrenaline at the start line, and the instant camaraderie between the runners. Most importantly, though, what I quickly realized was that without that goal, without the *challenge* that each race gave me, I was uninterested in running. While I *could* run every day for free, I only dutifully ran my daily four miles when I had a race looming.

Our word for this issue is *challenge*. Some of you – like my self-disciplined husband – are able to fuel your own fire, so to speak, and propel yourself towards greater things with your own internal motivation. But the majority of us, I believe, need a concrete challenge to work for, to strive towards, and to set our sights on. In this month's *Connection*, we'll spend some time in *the Chalkboard* and *the Locker Room* looking at academic competitions and contests that may start you thinking about challenges you can place in front of your students next year. Over at *the Desk*, we're discussing methods of teacher evaluations and year-end interviews that you can mull over as you look to the end of this school year.

Blessings to you as you continue your work on this homestretch! And whether it's signing up for a race or entering in a local science competition, may you find challenges that stretch you personally and professionally.

This Month's Question:

“Briefly describe an assignment that you give each year that you *most* look forward to grading.”

Selected responses will be featured on our website and future newsletters. Please email your response, along with your position and school name, to: crae@lasierra.edu.



The Chalkboard: notes for the elementary educator

Classroom Challenges

Fourth quarter is well underway and you're starting to gear up for the busy homestretch! You may also be in the process of reflecting on the successes of your past year and thinking through what you'd like to incorporate into the next school year.

With our theme of *challenge* in mind, we wanted to draw your attention this month to various competitions and contests out there that might be of interest to you and your class. Perhaps your group of students next year would enjoy the opportunity to rise to the occasion and meet the criteria of one of these challenges. The purpose of these events is *not* to push your students towards an intense rivalry with another school or to encourage an arrogant, cutthroat spirit. Rather, we feel that participation in one of these academic experiences – if facilitated appropriately – could be a hugely positive and worthwhile endeavor for you and your students. Working towards a common goal, finding a relevant application for the content they are studying and utilizing their knowledge and skills in a real way could be vastly appealing and motivating to students of all ages.

Let's begin first by looking at the Marshmallow Challenge, which dares participants to build the highest structure possible, using only 20 spaghetti sticks, tape, string and a single marshmallow. While on the surface, the Marshmallow Challenge is a design and engineering problem, this fun and simple project could be serve as an introduction to collaboration and competition. The observations you make during the Marshmallow Challenge can yield great insights about your students on their leadership skills, facilitation abilities, willingness to work as a team member, interest in working towards a goal, etc. Go to our online newsletter (crae.lasierra.edu) to find a ready-made lesson plan for the Marshmallow Challenge .

We've researched dozens of sites and resources and have compiled the following list of specific, elementary-level competitions and challenges that may strike a chord with you.

- **Math Olympiads:** A neat, grassroots organization that facilitates school-based teams. No traveling required.
- **Destination Imagination:** Seven challenges to choose from each year – all which encourage students to experience the entire creative process from imagination to innovation.
- **eCybermission:** For 6th-9th grades; all challenges are STEM-related and encourage teams to collaborate on a specific project. The “mission challenge” choices for 2014 included the areas of Alternative Sources of Energy, Environment, Food, Health & Fitness, Forces & Motion, National Security & Safety, Robotics, Technology.
- **Math Kangaroo:** A fun competition for grades 1-12; students can register individually or as a class.
- **Noetic Learning Math Contest:** Open to grades 2-8; students are given 45 minutes to finish 20 problems.
- **Young Scientist Challenge:** Challenges students to identify a problem, state it clearly in a 1-2 minute video, and create a solution.
- **Odyssey of the Mind:** Creative challenges that are solved over weeks and months; some are technical, others more artistic.
- **Adventure Write:** A fun, creative challenge for the writers in your group.
- **Midwest Creation Fellowship Writing Contest:** Annual essay contest specifically on the topic of evolution versus creation.
- **Poetic Power:** An open contest with opportunities to be published in its annual anthology.





The
Bulletin
Board

Your
Words

Your Words: Featured responses from March: "Name and describe a teacher that has had a profound impact on your life."

The Locker Room: notes for the academy educator

Challenge-Based Learning

There seemed to be so many "-based learning" methods these days: project-based learning, place-based learning, brain-based learning and problem-based learning, to name a few. Can we bring one more for your consideration – one that has seemed to garner less attention than the others? **Challenge-based learning (CBL)** is an engaging, innovative and multi-disciplinary methodology that technology giant Apple has developed through research and collaboration with educators around the world. The idea with CBL was to establish a workflow that mimicked a real life workplace – with space, time, direction and support for students to seek out solutions to a variety of challenges. While there are prescribed challenges that student teams can choose to work on, teachers and students are also invited to create their own challenges, based on the subject matter that is being studied or content that is relevant to the classroom.

One example is a team in Florida that studied the relevancy of the liberal studies major at a nearby college. They analyzed the required courses with needs of today's classrooms and came up with several recommendations and suggestions.

And like we've done in *the Chalkboard* this month, we want to point out some academy-appropriate, subject-specific challenges, contests and fairs that might make your students' eyes light up. Some of your students may thrive on friendly competition or working under a deadline. We hope it's worth



your while to explore these links we've researched and perhaps pick a challenge that is relevant to your content matter and interests.

Science

Google Science Fair

Art

Living Oceans Foundation
Doodle4Google: Submit artwork for their revolving banner!

Writing

Adventure Write
Poetic Power
Midwest Creation Fellowship
Stage of Life
Teen Ink
Guide Magazine

Math

There are a number of math competitions that you can find for the high school aged student, but we also wanted to specifically point out those that are sponsored at the local level. Many colleges and universities host some type of math competition. Below is just a sampling; look into a higher educational institution near you!

Texas A&M University
College of the Pacific
Georgia Tech
University of Maryland

Other

Future City: Writing, planning and designing a city using the SimCity platform

Darla McCarty, preschool, Okanagan Adventist Academy

"Ina Yarema, Cariboo Advents Academy, Williams Lake BC. Her caring and gentle ways have stayed with me all my life and helped shape the way I love teaching children."

Kate Lewis, science teacher Loma Linda Academy

"Hugh Winn, my principal at HMA from 2009-2012, definitely inspired me to continue to teach! He reminded me regularly of the reason we teach--because of the relationships we build with our students, and watching their progress throughout life. He connected with and cared for his teachers individually (as well as the students), and helped me in so many ways. Any time I've had a bad teaching day, I remember Mr. Winn and his passion for teaching and aspire to be more like him!"

Marilyn Beach, retired early childhood educator

My third and fourth grade teacher, Irene Walker. She made learning so interesting by keeping us busy doing projects in the classroom. It may have been making landscapes in a huge sandbox of places we were studying, or dressing dolls in the clothing of a country (complete with a competition for the best-dressed - student work only) or customizing the curriculum to fit each student.

Sarah Theoret, 2nd grade Thunderbird Christian Elementary

"Ian Nielsen Bothwell was my mentor at Atlantic Union College. I had already decided I wanted to be a teacher, but every class with her made me realize more and more how I wanted to TEACH like her. She brought her years of experience to life for us. I couldn't wait to make my students feel as loved, valued, validated and special as she made us! I will never forget my years with her trying to soak up everything she taught! Amazing woman!"

The Desk

notes for the administrator



Submission Guidelines

The *CRAE Connection* seeks to publish research-based and research-driven articles that have practical applications in the classroom and on campus.

Article submissions

Please submit a complete manuscript, between 300-600 words. Include full contact information: phone, email, and mailing address. Manuscript should be submitted as a .doc, .docx, .txt., or .rtf file to crae@lasierra.edu, subject title: *Connection* Article Submission

Please allow up to 1-2 months response time for *Connection* editors to review your submission. If we accept your article, you will receive an acceptance letter detailing your rights information as well as any revisions we'd like you to make.

Topic submissions

Connection editors welcome all topic suggestions. We are always looking for relevant topics that appeal to our readers and will carefully consider all recommendations.

Please submit topic suggestions to crae@lasierra.edu, subject title: *Connection* Topic Submission

Throwing Down the Gauntlet: Challenging Your Teachers Through Year-End Interviews

Two more months left in the race to the end of the school year! As teachers gear up for this homestretch with culminating projects and cumulative assignments, administrators can use this time to think through their year-end interviews. These conversations are generally held during post-session and can be a time for administrator and teacher to really sit down and reflect on the successes and failures of the school year, to look ahead to the new year, and to intentionally hone in on areas for improvement. As an administrator, you have the privilege of and responsibility for challenging your staff to new levels. For teachers whom you've observed with a weakness in classroom management, you can brainstorm ideas to strengthen this aspect, which may include spending a day in a mentor teacher's classroom or attending a professional development seminar on classroom management. For teachers whom you've observed with a wonderful rapport and connection with students, you can challenge them to write down some specifics of their approach and ask if they'd be willing to share it with their colleagues. Some ideas for you to consider in your year-end interviews:

Schedule in advance.

Teachers will take this dialogue seriously if they feel *you* take it seriously. For that reason, be sure to carve out a *sacred* time for each of these year-end interviews. For those of you with more than a dozen teachers on

your campus, this will take a great deal of time and effort on your end. Plan accordingly!

Ask open-ended questions. Come prepared with questions to actively engage your teacher in reflection and analysis. This is especially difficult at the end of the year when teachers want nothing more than to close up their classroom for the summer as quickly as possible!

What was your biggest success or achievement this year? What steps did you take that led to that?

What was your biggest struggle this year? What solutions did you try?

How did I support you as an administrator? In what ways could I have been more helpful?

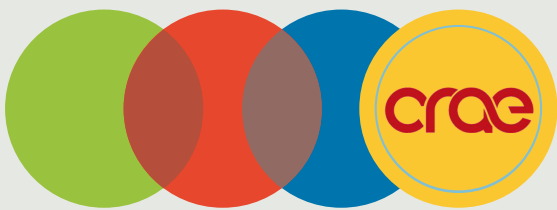
Be specific.

The least effective year-end interview is one that is forgotten and never discussed or brought up again. One way to safeguard against that is to be specific in this dialogue. What *specific* ways is the teacher looking to improve? Write those down. What *specific* challenges does he/she want to take on next year? Write those down.

Do your research. There are a plethora of helpful articles, books and resources out there to help you find ways to challenge your teachers in a way that best suits your own leadership style.

Awakened: Change Your Mindset To Transform Your Teaching, by Angela Watson.

The New Teacher Revolution, by Josh Stumpenhorst



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