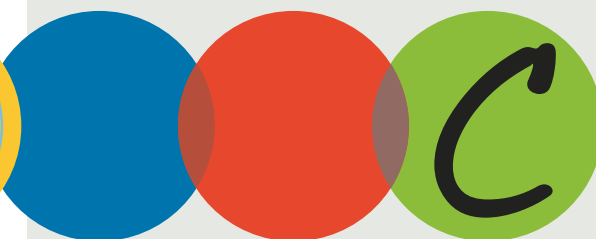
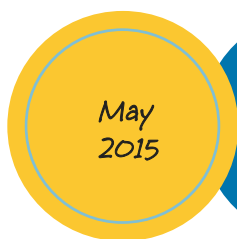
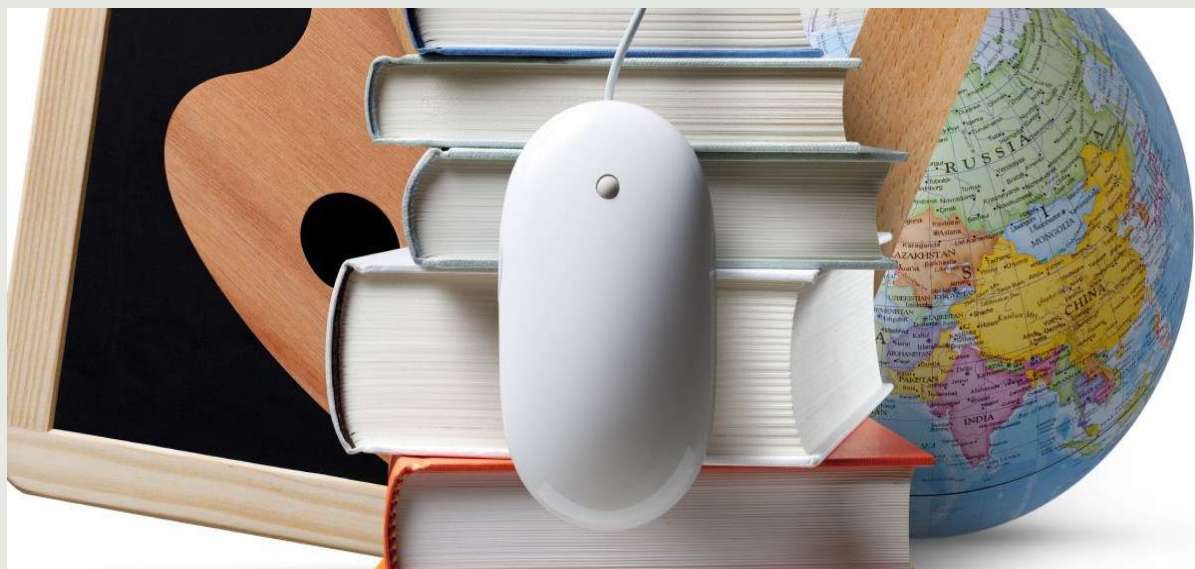


A monthly newsletter  
filled with practical,  
research-based  
articles for K-12  
educators across the  
North American  
Division



# the **crae** Connection

## A Note from the Editor



### THE CHALKBOARD

"Bullies & Broken Circles"

What do you do when your students' circles of friendship are not positive or nurturing?

pg 2

### THE LOCKER ROOM

"Evolving Circles"

How does social media impact teenagers today?

pg 3

### THE DESK

"Unsung Heroes"

One of the most important circles of support for administrators.

pg 4

The classroom was in utter disarray – books piled high on the floor, desks moved about, and trashcans overflowing with crumpled up papers. The familiar smell of Windex and sweaty children permeated the room as we labored to remove all traces of our existence from the past 180 days – the gum stuck to the bottom of the chair, the pencil shavings in dusty corners, the sticky buildup in the microwave. It was the end of my 7<sup>th</sup> grade year and we – all 24 of us – were chomping at the bit to be set free. When the last desk had been scrubbed clean and the windows were *almost* as sparkly as they were on the first day of school, our teacher called us to attention and had us sit on the floor in a circle. There was still a half hour before dismissal, he reminded us, and he had one last devotional to share.

Our teacher talked about the memories we'd shared over the last year, the field trips we'd taken and the fun we'd had. He talked about the growth he'd seen in each one of us and how proud he was of our successes. He ended by saying, "And now I'm going to tell you what I've told each one of the classes I've taught for the past 22 years." His voice dropped to a hushed tone and we all leaned in closer. "Some of you are coming back next year, while some of you are moving on to other schools, other towns, other states. But I want to see you again. Every single one of you. And here's how we're going to do it." After the 1000 years that we spend with Christ after His second coming, he told us, we – my teacher and every student of every class he'd ever taught – were to meet on the south side of the tree of life for a grand reunion. "South side," he emphasized sternly. "Don't forget."

In the years that have passed since that day, I've often imagined this amazing and remarkable gathering that will take place there. I envision a circle – just like the one we sat around on our classroom floor – except multiplied by hundreds – or even thousands – of former students and their families, all brought together by this one teacher.

One of the greatest opportunities we have in Adventist education is to form these circles for our students. In each of our classrooms, we want our students to be surrounded by people who love them, support them, and point them to Jesus.

Our theme for this month's *Connection* is "circles." As you read through these articles, we want you to consider these ideas: providing that circle of support for your student (even your most ornery one), recognizing the circles that our academy students run in, and finding ways to boost support and recognition for your circle of auxiliary staff.

Blessings to you as you finish out these last few weeks of the school year and continue seeking your own circles of support and nourishment.

"South side of the tree of life, Mr. Edwards. I'm still planning on it."

## This Month's Question:

“What has been your biggest success from this school year?”

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](mailto:crae@lasierra.edu).



# The Chalkboard: notes for the elementary educator

## Bullies & Broken Circles

Last month, third-grade teacher Kyle Schwartz created a lesson plan called “I Wish My Teacher Knew.” In an effort to build trust and community in her classroom, Schwartz invited her students to write down something that they wished she knew about them. The answers came pouring in – from short phrases to long descriptions, from the trivial to the poignant.

“I wish my teacher knew I had no one to play with.”

“I wish my teacher knew I don't have pencils at home to do my homework.”

“I wish my teacher knew that my reading log sometimes doesn't get signed because my mom isn't home a lot.”

Student learning can be greatly affected by so many things, and assignments like this particular one highlight all the other issues that can burden and distract even our youngest students. Unfortunately, bullying is one such problem that continues to penetrate the walls of our classrooms.

Here are some sobering statistics about bullying:

28% of students in 6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade have been bullied (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2011)

Reasons reported for being bullied: looks (55%), body shape (37%), and race (16%) (Davis and Nixon, 2010)

70.6% of young people say they have seen bullying in their schools (Bradshaw, Sawyer, and O'Brennan, 2007)

41% of school staff report witnessing bullying at least once a week (Bradshaw, Sawyer, and O'Brennan, 2007)



We *want* our classrooms to be safe havens for our children; we want their circles of friendships at school to be positive and nurturing. Unfortunately, there are all too many times that this is not the case. Here are some research-based solutions for you to consider as you handle bullies in your classroom:

**Include it in your curriculum.** Research has shown that addressing bullying in the curriculum is imperative if positive change is to be made. Ideally, an anti-bullying program or curriculum would be adopted and implemented campus-wide, but if that's not yet happening at your school, you can still start with your own classroom.

**Survey your students.** Most anti-bullying experts agree that administering an anonymous survey is an effective way to get students' opinions and thoughts on bullying issues in the classroom. It can provide insights into where bullying takes place, what the students' biggest concerns are and who the biggest offenders are.

**Talk with your colleagues.** If the other teachers on campus have *any* interaction with your students – at lunch, on the playground, at drop off or pick up – they might be able to share some important notes with you. Have they seen similar things with specific students? That observation would add weight and gravity to the situation. Have they observed a different set of behaviors around different peers? That added context would necessitate another type of solution.

**Address bullying immediately.** Time and time again, students have shared that the *worst* thing a teacher can do is to tell them to deal with it themselves or “just ignore” the bully. Bullying is an issue that adults must handle; they can equip students with the right tools – what to say, where to turn to for help – but the initial response must come from those in charge.



# The Locker Room:

## notes for the academy educator

### Challenge-Based Learning

When I was in third grade, our teacher asked each student to neatly write a note on an index card. We were instructed to include brief introduction of ourselves and the mailing address for the school. Tying these messages carefully to helium balloons, we released them from our school playground, watched as they became small dots in the vast sky, and patiently awaited responses from recipients far away. It's amusing to think about how and why that wouldn't go over so well in a classroom today – safety concerns (sending out your *address* to the world!), environmental issues (deflated balloons! tangled ribbons!) and a host of other problems – but that was, indeed, our attempt two decades ago to connect with the world outside of our own.

Today, we call that “social media”. Twenty five messages tied to balloons have been replaced with *billions* of posts, tweets, memes, pins and clips exchanged daily. A quick search online provides this definition of social media: “norms of electronic communication through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content.” Popular forms of social media include Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest, and Tumblr, just to name a few.

Would it surprise you to know that 9 out of 10 American teenagers use social media? Probably not. This recent study conducted by Piper Jaffray, an investment firm, found that 76% of teens use Instagram, 59% use Twitter and 46% use Facebook. Clearly, teenagers today have circles of friends and communities that extend far beyond classroom walls. Social media allows high schoolers to be connected to friends, acquaintances and strangers (surely you know a student or two who follows Beyoncé's Instagram feed...) at all times, with minute-by-minute peeks into their daily lives.

You may have heard some educators grumbling loudly about social media – the effect it has on teenagers and their attention spans and the social disconnect that is fostered. However, in a recent conversation with Ruben Santiago, a course curriculum strategist for the Florida Virtual School, he argues that “the millennial generation is more social than most, albeit in a less traditional sense. The medium has changed, but social interaction is exponentially higher than ever before.” If that's truly the case, how can educators embrace, rather than shun, these evolving circles that their students move in?

Here are some ideas for you to consider as you join your students in their evolving circles and gain some perspective on their current reality.

*Harness the power of social media!* With over 2 *billion* users on the top five social media sites, “social media utilities provide students with the means to interact with everything and experience everything, broadening their horizons and potentially generating interest in subjects that otherwise may go unnoticed if it were not for the viral nature of how fast things are shared,” notes Jarrod Lutz, English teacher at Spencerville Adventist Academy. How do educators tap into this?

- Tweet authors.
- Skype field trips.
- Use a social media outlet specifically designed for school. Lutz shared the following with *Connection* editors: “At Spencerville Adventist Academy, we use a social media utility specifically designed for the classroom called Schoology. A bit like Facebook, Schoology is a service that provides an online location where students and teachers can interact beyond the classroom in various ways. Schoology allows us to post assignments, calendar dates, grades, resources, and other of students' social and academic paradigms will result in more effective, relevant and engaged teaching in your classroom. Class-related materials while serving as a phenomenal platform on which to hold class discussions and communicate with students.”

*Go public.* Growing up with social media means students are not only accustomed to having their lives broadcast for the world to see, but also see it as a form of validation.

- *Service projects.* Service projects can take on a life of their own when shared with the public.
- *Posting/sharing completed assignments.* Flickr, Instagram and blogs are all great ways of touting your students' work. Of course,

always check with your school administrator and social media policies before posting.

*Address the impact of social media on peer relationships.* In a survey conducted with high school students in Oregon last year, researchers found that over 75% of the teenagers stated that texting was one of two ways that they started and ended relationships! And how often have you seen a group of students sitting around the lunch table, each engrossed in their own device. Students *need* their teachers to talk to them about forming positive relationships with their peers. Social media provides a comfortable mask in which to hide behind; teenagers are used to speaking freely, without consequences or ramifications. Engage your students in discussion about how those factors have transferred over to face-to-face conversations and what the differences are.

Wading your way into the social media stream may seem daunting at first, but Santiago reminds all educators that “it is important to stay relevant in the eyes of your students – if the first attempt doesn't work. . . reassess, adjust, and try again. [Too many teachers] lose hope and lose relevance due in part to a lack of social media presence.” Furthermore, writes Lutz, “the more we understand the internet, and the culture that exists within, the better we will be able to address pertinent issues that matter to them and relate to our students in a more meaningful way. Embrace the good and understand the bad in order to guide students through a rapidly changing landscape.” Your understanding of students' social and academic paradigms will result in more effective, relevant and engaged teaching in your classroom.

# 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](mailto: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](mailto:crae@lasierra.edu), subject title: *Connection* Topic Submission

## Unsung Heroes

Do you have a secretary who greets students with a smile every day? Does your campus have a maintenance person or team who makes sure the field is getting adequate water and the air conditioning filters are changed monthly? Or how about an after-school care employee who can magically get students to do their homework and allow parents a free evening with their children? These – these dedicated, hard-working support individuals who work behind the scenes – are the unsung heroes of each school.

One of the most important circles of support for administrators is their team of support staff, which can include librarians, janitors, teachers' aides, office assistants, and physical plant operators. Having people whom they can rely on to assist in taking care of students' needs, providing a welcoming face at the front desk, and ensuring that the physical plant is running smoothly is an amazing gift that takes a huge burden off of the administrator's shoulders.

Because of their crucial role in campus operations, support staff are not to be overlooked in areas that are addressed with full-time teaching staff – continual assessment, ideas for improved effectiveness and productivity, etc. Studies have shown that giving careful time and attention to your support staff can result in a better, stronger relationship between all parties involved. Consider these suggestions:

*Asking for feedback.* How do they feel about the role they're placed in? How are their interactions with students?

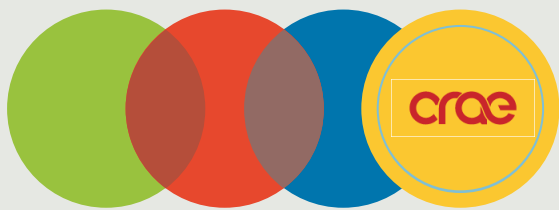
Teachers? Families?

*Utilizing their strengths.* The campus maintenance employee might have been a college soccer star and would love to coach the junior high soccer team. A staff member who works in the back office might actually shine through more personal interactions with parents at the front desk. Find out more about your support staff and place them in positions that will take advantage of and develop their natural talents.

*Encourage professional development.* One principal I recently spoke with told me that until recently, he'd had no idea that his secretary of 12 years had aspirations to get a degree in accounting. Not only was he excited for her and her personal and professional goals, but he also wholeheartedly welcomed the idea of his secretary being equipped with even more tools and knowledge to use in her work every day. After some conversation, they decided that she should leave early one day a week to attend evening classes and arranged for a parent to step in for those two hours to staff the front desk and phone.

On most campuses that have been surveyed, support staff are dedicated employees who have their school's best interests at heart. While their roles may not take them to the front and center stage of a classroom, assembly or gym, they still have ample opportunity to influence a school's climate and support teachers, students and administrators.

We hope you are blessed with a strong circle of support staff who, with your solid leadership, will continue to grow, develop and provide assistance to you and your campus.



4500 Riverwalk Pkwy,  
Riverside, Ca 92505  
951.785.2997  
[www.crae.lasierra.edu](http://www.crae.lasierra.edu)