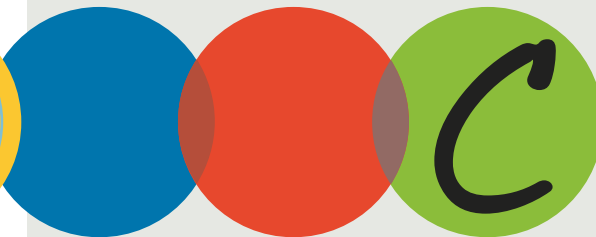
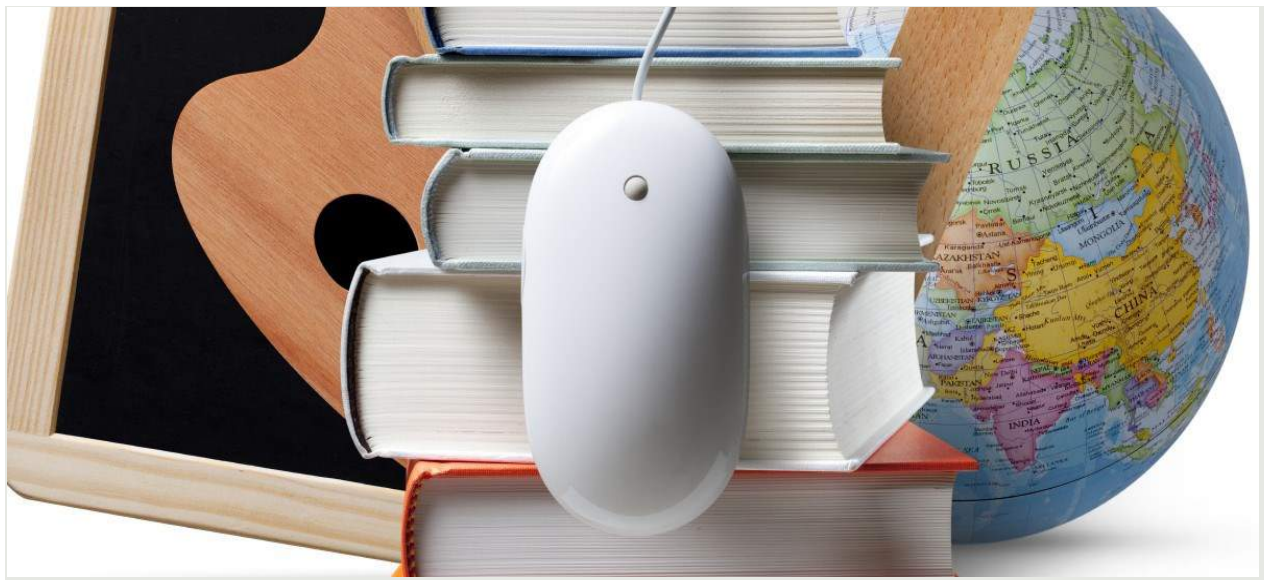


A monthly
newsletter
filled with practical,
research-based
articles for K-12
educators across the
North American
Division



the **crae** Connection

A Note from the Editor

I still have the wrapper from the gum that my first crush gave me in 4th grade. It even has the date written carefully on it. But alas, he then broke my heart by – yes – sharing pieces with other girls in the class.

And then there's the stash of notes I passed back and forth in Biology with my best friend – before a trivial spat over a misunderstanding turned into a far larger chasm that never quite healed.

And the roses I received from my now-husband on our first date.

And the speech that I wrote and shared at my grandmother's funeral a few years back – carefully crafted so as to fully represent what she meant to my family and me.

What do these preserved mementos have in common? Relationships – they're all about relationships. Some good, some bad, some beautiful, some awful -- but they are instances of my life intertwined with someone else's.

Relationships can be complicated, can't they? God created us as social creatures – we thrive, grow, and learn from and with other people. And when it works, it's a beautiful thing – warm, nurturing families, Christ-centered couples and supportive communities. But it does take exactly that – *work*. Relationships don't just happen; they are the result of intention, commitment and resolve. As we will discuss in *The Chalkboard* this month, children need to be reminded of the power of choice – in their behavior, in their relationships, in their lives. In *The Locker Room*, we will be touching on depression - which usually stems from a broken *internal* relationship -- and its ramifications on our academy-aged students. And finally, over at *The Desk*, we will be sharing with our administrators some thoughts on difficult relational topics – death and divorce, to name two – and how we can navigate these waters carefully and respectfully.



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The Chalkboard: notes for the elementary educator

C is for choice

I used to teach at a school nestled in a valley where the Santa Ana winds blew strongly. In the fall, there would be days when the winds howled – kicking up dust storms, creating piles of debris in the streets, even toppling trees.

But in addition to the dust and twigs and leaves that tumbled into my classroom, the wind also seemed to blow in wild behavior. Those sweet, cooperative, amiable children somehow morphed into ornery, argumentative, rowdy hooligans.

It wasn't only the wind, though, that brought on that behavior. School assemblies did the same thing. As did chapels. And Spirit Weeks. And holidays and field trips and minimum days. I complained one afternoon to a colleague about this trend in my students' behavior, and she responded tactfully, "Do you think that perhaps their behavior is . . . a choice?"

Her simple question turned me completely upside down. Somehow, somewhere, I had begun to assume that my students' behavior was fixed – something to be tolerated and endured.

But – special situations notwithstanding – behavior *is* a choice, isn't it? And teaching students the *power* that they have over themselves – their bodies, their decisions, their choices – is just as important as teaching them subjects.

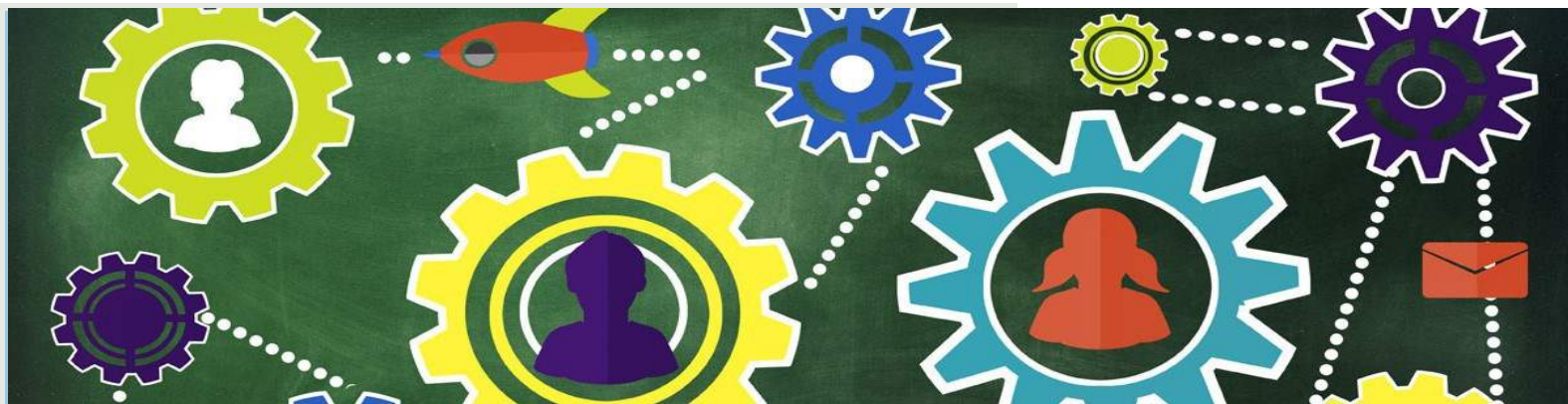
In William Glasser's *The Quality School*, great emphasis is placed on the importance of exercising choice in the classroom, inevitably setting up students for success. Practicing the principles of his theory – termed Choice Theory – can positively affect your pedagogy.

Practical ways you can begin the process or even reevaluate your classroom environment include:

1. Setting aside time to dedicate your students and your classroom to God. This may seem obvious, but it is easy to move year to year without remembering to do so, or even remembering that you have done so.
2. Allowing your students to practice making choices daily. As writer Alfie Kohn suggests, "If you want children to make good values over the long haul—then there is no substitute for giving them the chance to become actively involved in deciding what kind of people they want to be and what kind of classroom or school they want to have. If you want children to take responsibility for their own behavior, we must first give them responsibility, and plenty of it."¹
3. Leading by modeling. As teachers we should make it our effort to try doing something new in our lives, "something [we] must struggle to master, in order to appreciate what [our] students put up with every day."² Modeling our humanity to our students, our ability to choose, creates a degree of relate-ability as you and they embark on your educational journey.

By continually encouraging your students to take ownership of their choices, you will be helping them recognize the power they have over their actions, their lives and their relationships.

Kohn, A. (1995). "Discipline is not the problem – not the solution". Learning Magazine. Retrieved from <http://www.alfiekohn.org/article/discipline-problem-solution>



The Locker Room: notes for the academy educator

Teenage Depression: Helping students find the light

A student slowly trudges into your classroom and finds his seat. Sixth period, row two, chair five. He slouches down at his desk, sinking as low as he can comfortably go. He responds to your queries with baleful glances or shrugs of indifference. When the bell rings, he gathers his things, and by the time you've answered all questions and collected homework and can look up to catch him, he's gone.

And this isn't the first time. You've noticed that this student has been acting like this all week – subdued, indifferent, disengaged. Is it a red flag? Or just par for the course for teenage behavior?

Consider these facts:

- 16% of high school students have reported that they have seriously contemplated committing suicide.

- One in five teens will experience depression at some point before reaching adulthood.

- The average age for the onset of teenage depression is 14.

- Five percent of teens are currently experiencing a major depression event.

As a teacher at the academy level, you have no doubt encountered students who seem troubled, discouraged or bothered. But how do you know if, say, it's a trivial matter between friends that will resolve easily or a more serious issue that will escalate into something deeper?

Here are some indicative signs to look for in high school students, as noted by a team of researchers for the ASCD:

- Self-deprecating comments
- Defiance with authority figures, difficulties interacting with peers, argumentativeness
- Pessimistic comments, suicidal thoughts
- Isolation, frequent change in friends
- Isolation and withdrawal
- Sulking, noncompliance
- Theft, sexual activity, alcohol or drug use, truancy
- Acting out of character, sleeping in class

And finally – some other things to consider as you work with your students, day in and day out:

When in doubt, ask.

For all the lists in the world, the best advice is probably to trust your instincts. If you feel like something is off, if a student's behavior is setting off alarms in your mind, if there's something amiss that you can't quite put your finger on – go with it! Set aside some time to pull the student aside and talk with her. She might not confide in you immediately – or even at all – but even by just broaching the conversation, you may get a better feel for the situation.

Big problems usually start from little problems.

Yes, much of high school does entail some drama, doesn't it? However, it would be wise to remember that issues that send students into a downward tailspin don't just materialize out of thin air. Keep an ear out for the whisperings, the rumblings of those smaller issues – arguments, breakups, confrontations – and that might lead you to be on the ready for helping students through darker times.

Snoop.

In a good way, of course. You probably

know who your troubled student's closest friends are; see if they have any information that could shed some light on their friend's behavior. They may actually be relieved to be sharing the burden with a teacher and be inclined to unload on you about their concerns for their friend.

Consult your team.

Teaching at the academy level usually means that you're not the student's only teacher. Chances are, you have that student for 50 or 80 minutes a day, while there are *other* staff who also interact with these students and have observations of their own. Talk to them, share notes, and see if you can find a pattern in behavior or attitude.

Be present.

Perhaps the biggest, most significant thing you can do for a struggling student is just to be there. Be present. Be available. Create an environment in your classroom that is welcoming, open and safe. Allow time and space for students to feel comfortable approaching you for advice or confiding in you about their situations.

Share Jesus. As an Adventist educator, you have the awesome responsibility to share Jesus with your students – to reflect the light that has been shown in your own life and to communicate a message of hope, grace and love. Students need to see and hear and feel that their self-actualization and self-worth only comes through Christ and through Him and that they have such enormous worth and value. Teaching in an Adventist school affords you the opportunity to remind students of the ultimate defense against depression – God's all-encompassing, unconditional love and His plan for them.



The Desk: notes for the administrator

Treading Carefully on Tricky Situations

During my first year as a principal, our school suffered a tremendous loss when a beloved father of four siblings who attended our school passed away two months after school started. He had fought a long and hard battle with colon cancer and at last, in the safe haven of their family home, succumbed to the disease. There was a huge outpouring of love and support for the family, an enormous crowd at the memorial service and a meal train established that lasted for months.

I was 25, still struggling to make sense of opening reports and classroom funds and principal's councils, and was – to say the least – ill-equipped to handle the four small children who bravely trudged back on to our campus the week after their dad died.

Relationships make up so much of our existence and therefore, when something goes awry with the relationships in our lives – through situations such as divorce or death or loss – what do we do? What *can* we do – especially as leaders on our campuses?

Here are some ideas to think about as you tread carefully through these tricky situations:

Talk about it. One thing I've heard over and over about grief and trauma is that *most* people involved

want to talk. They want to share their feelings, to air out their emotions and to provide their own narrative to the situation. So while you might naturally shy away from starting up a conversation with your students or with your teachers, intending to respect their grief and give them space, there might actually be a sense of relief if you do bring it up sensitively and simply ask, "Do you want to talk about it? Do you want to tell me what happened?"

Provide practical support.

Whether it's a loss within a family or a school-wide tragedy or a personal situation that one of your teachers is dealing with, assess what the most salient needs are first. If food is already covered, where else could you fill a gap? One thing we ended up doing for the family in the situation above was working out a car-pool to help take the kids to and from school as well as to piano lessons and basketball practice. Can you give extra support for a grieving teacher by taking over his/her supervision load or providing additional aide time?

Find balance. There seems to be a fine line between maintaining a consistent routine for the struggling individual and keeping them accountable and yet not demanding too much during this difficult time. Some situations will require more flexibility while others need a firmer hand to

help them regain their footing. Determine this balance the way you would approach every other task – through careful discretion, much thought, and daily prayer.

Have a plan. Maybe you haven't experienced this type of loss in your school community. Maybe your school year is rolling along smoothly, without any hitches. Take advantage of this time and create a plan so that when crisis *does* strike, you and your staff are prepared. This may include:

- Contacting trained counselors, pastors, and/or psychologists and asking them to be on your call list for necessary situations

- Establishing a method of communication amongst your staff as well as your school family. Some schools use phone trees, while others subscribe to a texting service that can quickly send mass texts.

- Build a collection of grief/trauma-related resources – books, videos, etc – for all age levels that you can use with your students and/or staff



The Bulletin Board: *notes for the whole community*

Last month, we asked the **CRAE Connection** community:

“I couldn’t teach without _____!”

“ . . . running my lesson plans by Jesus first!”

-- Darna Height, 2nd-4th grade teacher, Valley Adventist Christian School

“ . . . a lot of prayer.” -

- Craig Vendouris, Jr. High History and Bible teacher, Glendale Adventist Academy

“ . . . love for our kiddos.”

-- Sharon Crowder, doctoral student, University of Illinois

“ . . . Christ by my side.”

-- Hue Washington, retired educator

“ . . . a sense of humor! I have taught in the jungle without electricity, running water, whiteboards, textbooks, or enough pencils for each student. That still works! But if I get grumpy and lose my sense of humor, I’m done for.”

-- Denise Tonn, science teacher, Rio Lindo Academy

“ . . . Music! Nothing changes a tough morning like putting on some music and resetting the tone of room.”

-- Sarah Theoret, 2nd grade teacher, Thunderbird Christian Elementary

“ . . . a supportive group of coworkers!”

-- Lori Dickerson Rusek, 3rd & 4th grade teacher, Northwest Christian School

“ . . . The Holy Spirit and the support of parents and school staff! God bless them!”

-- Laura Jean Muir, 1st-4th grades teacher, Los Banos Adventist School

Thank you for your responses!

**Next month’s question: “Instead of teaching,
I will be _____ over Spring Break!”**



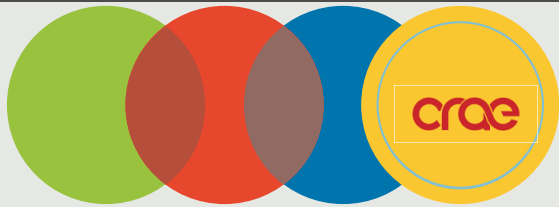
CRAE: keeping you informed

(Editor's Note: Based on recent feedback, we are going to include a small column each month about the goings-on at the Center for Research on K-12 Adventist Education.)

CRAE director, Elissa Kido, travels across the country – and world – every month for presentations, committee meetings, and her work with the NAD Education Taskforce (NADET). In November 2015, Kido attended the NAD year-end meetings in Silver Spring, MD, to present recommendations from the NADET. She was completely taken by surprise, however, when the NAD leaders took to the platform after her presentation to acknowledge her contributions to Adventist education. This award recognized the decades-long career she has had as an Adventist educator. Kido is extremely passionate about the church's mission to mold the hearts and minds of young people in ways that reflects God.

"Adventist education certainly had a profound influence on my life and brought me to a place wherein I can assist in ensuring today's young people have the same opportunities," said Kido.

Ambassadors for Adventist Education (AACE) continues to expand their impact through volunteers around the country. Most recently, AACE coordinator Aimee Leukert presented in Bakersfield, CA, sharing the advantages of Adventist education to ten church congregations gathered at the Area 5 Convocation. She garnered the interest of Bakersfield Adventist Academy and, after much dialogue, AACE has decided to collaborate with BAA and use them as a pilot program for AACE. We are excited to work with them to champion Adventist education in their community.



4500 Riverwalk Pkwy, 951.785.2997
Riverside, Ca 92505 www.crae.lasierra.edu

Brain Blurb

Did you know? Relationships in the classroom have an impact on achievement because the brain does not naturally separate emotions from cognition, either anatomically or perceptually (Caine & Caine, 1994).