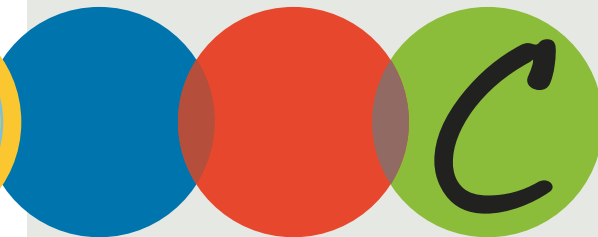
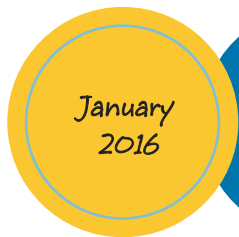


A monthly
newsletter
filled with practical,
research-based
articles for K-12
educators across the
North American
Division



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Connection

A Note from the Editor

I had the opportunity to drive to Central California just this last weekend on a business-related trip. Southern California has been experiencing our usual version of winter – lows in the 40s and 50s, but we’ve also had a few weeks of steady rain. That combination provided my family and me with a particularly scenic drive as we drove up the Grapevine (a section of Interstate 5 that goes through the Tehachapi Mountains and into the San Joaquin Valley). My young daughters gasped in delight and kept calling out, “Snow! Look – there’s snow!” And sure enough – right out our car windows – close enough to touch at times, there was pure, white, glittering snow.



THE CHALKBOARD

“Time Out: Thoughts on Recess”
Well-organized recess time can
contribute to a positive school
environment.
pg 2

As I gazed out on the snow-capped hills that dotted our drive, I was overwhelmed by a sense of . . . renewal. The crisp air, the fresh snow, the bright blue skies, the sparkling clean scenery – they reminded me of the text found in Lamentations 3:22-23:
“Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail.
They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.”

THE LOCKER ROOM

“Brain Breaks”
Your students’ brains may simply
need a break.
pg 3

New every morning. What an awesome promise, isn’t it? And how fitting for our first *Connection* issue of the new year – 2016.

THE DESK

“Second Semester:
Renewing Resolutions”
The middle of the school year
might be the perfect time for
renewal..
pg 4

Our theme for this month’s *Connection* is *renewal*. New Year resolutions may be passé, so we thought we’d approach this month’s articles from the angle of *renewal*. In *The Chalkboard*, we discuss some thoughts on recess and the importance of that renewing time for young students. A similar conversation takes place over at *The Locker Room* as we share some ideas for brain breaks for academy students – tiny bits of activity that can produce renewed focus in students.

And finally, at *The Desk*, we look at how the beginning of a new calendar year can provide administrators with a brief window of opportunity to reflect on the work of the first semester and look towards new challenges in this second half of the school year.



The Chalkboard: notes for the elementary educator

Time Out: Thoughts on Recess

A quick Google search on “recess in schools” will display a number of alarming headlines: “No Time for Recess; No Need for Nap” “Elementary Schools Cut Out Recess; Blame Common Core” “School Cancels Recess to Improve Test Scores” and “Time Out: Is Recess in Danger?” Public policies continue to push for more classroom time, higher standards and better test results, leaving administrators with few options other than cutting down on all that seems superfluous – including recess.

Research continues to show, however, that children *do better* on so many different levels when given time to play during the school day. A recent Stanford study showed that structured, well-organized recess time can contribute to a positive school environment, stronger peer relationships and other favorable outcomes including attendance and achievement.

In addition to social and emotional benefits, there are the obvious advantages that recess provides to a student’s physical health. In a country where one out of three children are considered obese or overweight, educators should be even more aware of the need to encourage and educate children about healthy lifestyle habits.

Here are some ideas to consider for recess in this new year:

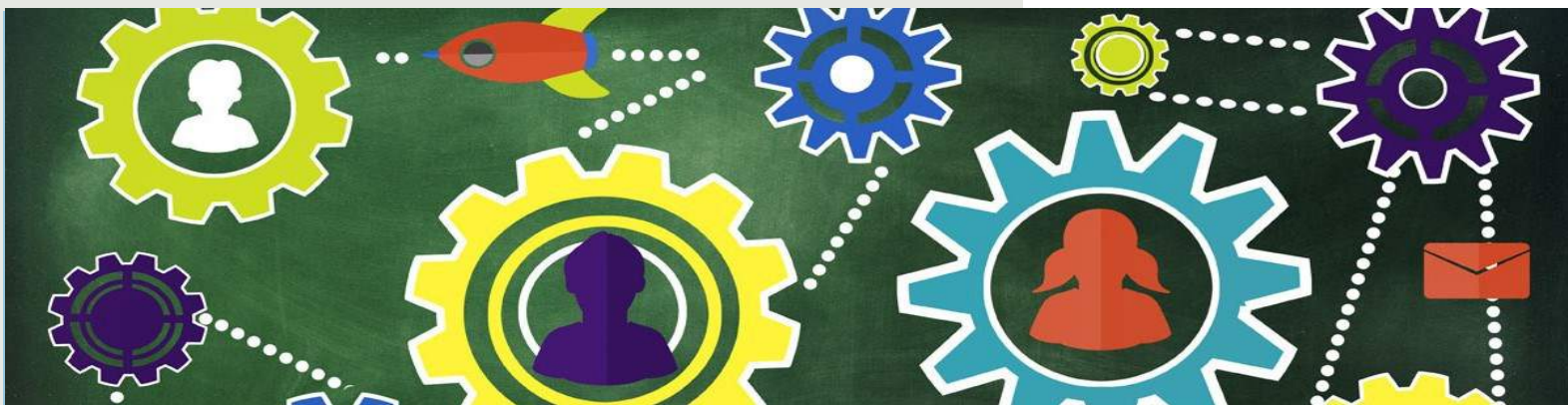
Recess for all. You may have already heard this in one form or another, but it bears repeating: children who are made to stay in from recess as a punishment for poor behavior usually *need* recess the most. Explore different classroom management tools that don’t involve taking recess away.

Be engaged. Students *always* love it when their teachers participate in a game with them, but even if you don’t go as far as to step in to a game of kickball or four-square, be engaged! Encourage the player at bat, clarify game rules as needed or simply show students that you are there and interested in what they are playing.

Observe. Recess can be one of the best times to observe your students. The dynamic can often be different on the playground than it is in the classroom, and it can be fascinating to see the different strengths of each child emerge. Are certain students getting picked on? Do you notice students who are continually being left out? Are there students who are struggling to keep up?

Add another recess. Say what?! Before you start sputtering, consider this: four schools in Texas have begun scheduling *four* recess times a day for their elementary students – three times more than they used to get! Initially nervous about losing class time with their students and transitioning back from being outside, teachers have been overwhelmingly positive about the additional recesses. One teacher noted, “Recess seems to reboot the system so that when they go back in, they’re ready to learn, they’re focused.”

One of the blessings at an Adventist school is the holistic approach we have towards education. We know that our students thrive only when we seek to educate the whole person – mind, body and soul. Recess may seem like a trivial subject when compared to other curriculum or program issues, but we’d encourage you to spend some time in this new year considering how you can continue nurturing the development of the whole child.



The Locker Room: notes for the academy educator

Brain Breaks

Have you ever been up front, delivering a brilliant lesson – one that you spent hours crafting – only to look out and see glazed-over stares in your audience? There's a good chance that it's not your lesson content that is lacking, but rather, that your students' brains simply need a break.

Research has shown that breaking up long periods of focus with a short, random activity can actually lead to greater productivity in the long run. Some studies have found 25 minutes to be the longest amount of time that students should focus before giving their brain a chance to renew, recharge and reboot.

This might seem like something that is better suited for the elementary classroom – with all those wiggly bodies and pent-up energy – but for those of us who have taught at the academy level, we are well aware that our older students could often benefit from brain breaks as well.

By the time one gets to high school, recess is a thing of the past. Requirements for physical education have also changed, resulting in high school students who go straight from one period to the next, with only a short lunch break in the middle of the day.



Here are some resources to look through that provide a number of ideas for utilizing brain breaks in your classroom:

Watch, Know, Learn: A collection of short video clips of various brain breaks

Take a Break: A wonderfully detailed resource from the Colorado Education Initiative, specifically designed for the secondary classroom

Upside Down: A list of 50 different brain break ideas that can be adapted for the academy level

Grab a pad of paper, jot some of these ideas down, and try one or two out in your classroom when you feel like the energy is flagging!

Resources

- <http://fairtest.org/no-time-recess-no-need-nap>
- <http://insider.foxnews.com/2015/01/14/florida-elementary-schools-cut-out-recess-blame-common-core>
- <http://www.kctv5.com/story/30119683/school-cancels-recess-to-improve-test-scores>
- <http://www.centerforpubliceducation.org/Main-Menu/Organizing-a-school/Time-out-Is-recess-in-danger>
- <http://news.stanford.edu/news/2015/february/recess-benefits-school-021115.html>
- http://kidshealth.org/parent/general/body/overweight_obesity.html
- <http://www.today.com/parents/want-kids-isten-more-fidget-less-try-more-recess-school-t65536>
- <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2011/02/110208131529.htm>
- <http://watchknowlearn.org/Category.aspx?CategoryID=17404>
- <http://carriewisehart.com/2015/01/09/teachupside-down-50-brain-breaks-to-engage-students-in-the-classroom/>

There are a myriad of ways that teachers can plan for a short brain break in the middle of a class. Brain breaks are not intended to be long – usually 3-5 minutes will suffice – and they generally involve some type of physical movement.



The Bulletin Board:

notes for the whole community

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

Complete the sentence. "Because of _____, I am an educator." We were overwhelmed by the responses! Our office had so much fun reading through the short reasons that brought you into the field of Adventist education.

Here are just some of the submissions we received:

"God's leading in my life." - Joseph Choi, music director, Highland View Academy (<http://www.highlandviewacademy.com/>)

"My desire to make a positive difference." - Amber Miller-Bower, principal/head teacher, Indianapolis Southside Christian Academy (<http://www.indy-isca.org/>)

"Wanting to make a life-long difference in people's lives." - Debbie Baroi, science teacher, San Fernando Academy (<http://www.sfva.org/>)

"Because of Archie Devitt and Merritt Schumann, my music teachers at Campion Academy." - Barbara Favorito, retired educator

"Because of God's providence and the opening of unexpected nor desired doors." - Klaus Leukert, retired educator

This month's question: "I couldn't teach without _____!"



The Desk

notes for the administrator

Second Semester: Renewing Resolution

During my time as an administrator, I found that there was a very small window of opportunity in the school year where I felt things were moving along smoothly and I could come up for a quick breath of air. With all "firsts" behind us - first parent/teacher conferences, first music programs, first standardized tests - January usually meant a brief respite from the manic pace that took over the other 9 months of the school year.

This time on the surface, so to speak, provided me with a chance to look around, reflect on the work of the first semester and see how close I was to the original goals and expectations I'd set in August. My viewpoint in January usually had more clarity and was more grounded in reality than my perspective in August. Five months into the school year - you generally have a better sense of what is attainable, where the *real* problems are, and what's best left to be tackled another year.

Are you having a surface moment now? Do you have some time to reflect on your campus and renew some of those resolutions that you may have made in August? Maybe you've wanted to be a more visible presence on campus. Maybe you planned on having more one-on-one time with your teachers to check in on how they're doing. Maybe you wanted to attend a professional development conference but just never could commit to hitting "submit" on the registration form.

Even though it's the middle of the school year, it might be the perfect time for renewal. Look through the list below that we've compiled from administrators around the country and see if a particular one (or two or three) resonates with you. Perhaps committing to one might be the very thing you need to finish out this school year strongly.

Remove clutter. From your campus, your policy or your desk. **Inspire.** Be intentional about inspiring your staff and/or your students by focusing on what *can* be done and taking steps towards those dreams.

Celebrate more. Find small moments to celebrate and take joy in - a hard earned C, a broken sprinkler head that was finally replaced, a shy teacher speaking up in staff meeting.

Be grateful. Keep a journal of daily things that you are thankful for or commit to posting 30 days of pictures on Facebook or Instagram of blessings.

Read. Reading might be at the very bottom of your list of things to do, but making time to read - both for pleasure and for professional growth - is a simple way to foster growth and learning for yourself.

Nurture your body. We all know the benefits of a healthy body and lifestyle - but sometimes it takes a new year to push us into doing more towards that end.

Renewal only happens through purpose and intentionality; make the most of this small window of opportunity to find something that will sustain you through the rest of this school year.