



# Induction/ Mentor Program Newsletter

D O L T O N   S C H O O L   D I S T R I C T   1 4 8

IMP Calendar



## Should Tests be the Final Measure of Student Success? By Susan Fitzell



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### April Meeting Dates.

- Franklin is Tuesday, April 20<sup>th</sup>, at 7:40am in the gym
- Tubman is Tuesday, April 20<sup>th</sup>, at 2:45pm in the media center
- Park is Wednesday, April 21<sup>st</sup>, at 3:15 in the media center
- ECC is Thursday, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, at 7:40am in Ms. Przybyla's room
- Riverdale is Thursday, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, at 2:45pm in Ms. Garwood's room
- Washington is Friday, April 23<sup>rd</sup>, at 7:40am in the junior high gym
- Lincoln is Tuesday, April 27<sup>th</sup>, at 7:40am in the third floor media center
- Roosevelt/Roosevelt Junior High is Thursday, April 29<sup>th</sup>, at 7:40am in the junior high media center

### May Meeting Date

Colloquium will be held Tuesday, May 11 from 3:45 – 4:45pm at Lincoln School

As teachers, most of us have been taught that tests are the best way to assess our students' learning (and the effectiveness of our teaching). But when a student scores poorly on a test, how does he or she benefit? The student loses confidence and ends up feeling 'stupid.' I believe we can use tests to improve learning, not just check what our students have memorized.

I recently attended a conference where the speaker, Thomas Guskey, challenged us to consider how we might change the culture of classroom testing. Guskey asked, "What happens to these tests? What educational purpose do they serve?" His point was that teachers typically grade tests, give them back, and then move on. Students put their tests away and never look at them again. Some students will even make a show of sauntering to the

trash to crumple and toss their test in the bin. If a student feels like she studied hard for a test and still got a bad grade, she can become disillusioned and disheartened with the classroom cycle that consists of teaching and testing, teaching and testing.

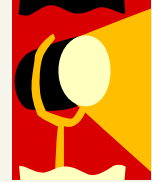
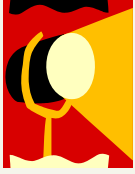
Many times, testing simply feels like a win or lose game between students and their teacher. I'll never forget the day my son and I were discussing testing in one of his least favorite classes (and with his least favorite teacher) and he looked me square in the eyes and said, "Mom, I refuse to play the game." My son was in honors classes, yet he felt this way! What if his tests were used as a learning tool instead of a 'gotcha'? Would it be perceived as less of a game if students had a chance to retake the test, or work out where they'd gone wrong?

There is an argument

for the exam as the final assessment: if students don't have the knowledge by the time they're tested, that's unfortunate, but it's time to move on – there's only so much time to teach the material. "What about a surgeon? Do they 'test' their learning on a genuine patient?" Guskey asked. "Or do they get to check their learning on a cadaver to make sure they've got it worked out?" You wouldn't show a surgeon a heart bypass in a textbook and then send him or her straight into the operating room!

Tests give us crucial insight into areas where students are struggling. By moving on immediately after giving an exam, we're missing a valuable opportunity to teach our students exactly what they need to learn! Rather than a game in which students either win or lose, we can turn testing into a win-win classroom

# IMP Spotlight Section



## TEACHER SPOTLIGHT MR. CARTER

Mr. Alvin Carter is a 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher at Roosevelt Elementary. Mr. Carter worked for CPS for 14 years as an instructional assistant. Due to cutbacks Mr. Carter's job was eliminated and since he had a bachelor's degree and loved working with children, his administrator encouraged him to enroll in an alternative certification program. He received his teaching certificate in 2006. Mr. Carter is a very engaging and caring teacher. He motivates the unmotivated students and

they are excited about learning. Mr. Carter uses innovative and creative lessons plans to keep his students engaged and enthusiastic about learning. Mr. Carter came to the 5<sup>th</sup> grade class in late October. This could have been a very difficult situation. However, Mr. Carter was able to establish a relationship with his students, teach, and prepare his students for ISAT. In the short time that Mr. Carter has been with the Roosevelt family he has made a very positive impact on his students. Mr. Carter is a

professional musician, he plays the keyboard and sings. He also took on the enormous task of coordinating the Black History Program, "They Did it and So Can I" and it was very successful. The performances by the students were awesome. Congratulations Mr. Carter job well done!



## AN INTERVIEW WITH THE SUPERINTENDENT

**Dr. Purcell, I hear you have been in the district for some time; can you please provide a brief bio on your teaching/admin experience in the Dolton School District #148?**

I have been an employee in the District for 25 years and I taught special education at Roosevelt and then at Lincoln Elementary and Junior High. I then became principal at k-6 and then when the new building was finished the principal of the k-8 building. Years later I became the the Director of Support Programs and finally Superintendent.

**What are some of the major challenges you are confronted with on a**

**daily basis as it relates to children/students?**

Each day I must be alert and think globally to make collaborative decisions that impact our students and staff. Each individual issue must be reviewed and responded to with dignity and respect for everyone involved. I am hopeful that all those decisions always provide positive energy that creates a synergy in everyone to impact student learning.

**What keeps you motivated or what inspires you?**

I'm motivated by the incredible energy and potential that lies in our students and in our staff members. Our possibilities are endless if we believe we can make a difference for each and every child and in one another. I feel that I can make a difference when I treat each person with

respect and value and challenge them to become everything that they want to become providing the resources necessary to make that happen.

**Finally, what is your personal vision for Dolton School District 148?**

My vision for District 148 is to build a district wide educational environment that enhances and embraces the needs of all students, staff and community, welcoming collaboration, innovation and a vision that provides opportunity and success for all stakeholders.





## Should Tests be the Final Measure of Student Success? (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1.)

experience by giving students the opportunity to learn from their mistakes. We can change the culture in our classrooms by using tests as a tool to facilitate learning rather than marking the end of the learning process.

I saw a fantastic example of this type of assessment when I was coaching teachers at Odessa High School in Texas. Two teachers were co-teaching a science class. For the first part of the lesson students took a typical test that the co-teachers quickly graded as they were turned in (while the students

were engaged in another task). From the test, they picked up ‘grey areas’ where a significant number of students had struggled and ‘failed’. Then they spent the second part of the class period re-teaching these ‘grey’ elements. Students were then allowed to re-take this part of the test where, of course, they improved. Rather than feeling disillusioned, students felt empowered and motivated to ‘learn from their mistakes’.

As I was considering Guskey’s points, I reflected on my own experiences. When I was in graduate school, the method of learning was an iterative

process, where we continually redrafted our work until it was up to standard. There was no formal testing, but the same piece of work would sometimes be returned six or seven times with feedback. I would read the professor’s comments and learn how to improve my work – no disillusionment, just improvements. I learned more than I had in any test-driven educational program, and I actually remembered what I’d learned.

The next time you’re preparing a test, consider how you might make it into a learning tool. You may be surprised to find that you can turn your tests into a positive learning experience for all of your students.



### ASK MOLLY THE MENTOR...

““Ask Molly the Mentor” is intended as a place for new staff to ask questions pertaining to teaching in District 148. All questions will be considered anonymous unless the author indicates they would like their name used as a part of the article. Please send your submissions via email to Mike Hurst or send them via district mail to Mike Hurst at Informational Services. All questions will be answered by the IMP Team. Not all submission will be printed.

**Hey Molly,**

**Now that ISAT is over, the students seem to think the school year is over. How can I convince them to keep working?**

**Sincerely,  
Nothing but ISAT**

Dear NBS,

I understand the dilemma. We have emphasized ISAT so much that now that it is

completed there does not seem to be any reason to learn anything at school. We must continue to give our students a reason to learn. Here are a few things to consider as we move to the fourth quarter.

What kind of relationship you have built with your students? Remember the book by Dr. Ruby Payne and her discussion of student / teacher relationships. Also, consider the book Listening to Urban Kids, in which students state their expectations of their teachers. Find out the things they like and use it as a reward.

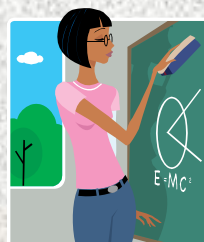
How are your procedures working? The spring is a time when students may forget or begin not to follow the procedure you have had in your classroom all year long. It may be frustrating to continue to practice procedures, but it is necessary. Consider practicing procedures as needed, especially as we return from spring break.

Are your students engaged?

Our students need to have something to do at all times. Consider the Collection of Engaging Activities resource you have completed for the IMP. Designing engaging lessons for our students will reduce the amount of time for misbehavior in your classroom. Remember there is no “free time” for students in SD148. Even reward activities must be structured.

So, by building relationships with students, by continuing to be relentless in practicing and following your classroom procedures, and by designing engaging lessons for our students, you should be able to keep our students learning up until the final day of school. Good luck!

Molly the Mentor



**Hi Molly,  
As the school year ends, what do I have to do to close my classroom for the summer?**

**Sincerely,  
Mike**

Dear Mike,  
You will receive a check-out list from your principal in early May. The list has a number of things that you must complete before the last day of school. Please discuss this list with your building mentor when you receive it. You may want to consider putting together a timeline to complete the list by the final day of school. Enjoy your summer!

Molly the Mentor

## TEACHER STRESS

Teachers have a huge responsibility, having been entrusted with the well being, discipline and education of a classroom full of children. Add to this, high stakes testing, demanding administrators, and challenging students. No wonder teachers are stressed.

Stress has many negative effects on a teacher. It negatively affects the way the brain and the nervous system operate. The cognitive processes that help people manage conflict become impaired. This leads to memory loss, the inability to solve problems and the absence of creativity. Stress can cause headaches, irritability, and depression. It often affects their compassion and empathy.

According to Dr. Rolin McCraty of the Institute of HealthMath, "Teachers are exhausted from lack of sleep and overwork, which has an impact on their preparation, their class demeanor, and their relationships with others in school." Our students respond to our stress. Dr. Liza Nagel associate professor of health education at the University of New Mexico explains that "Sometimes, the reaction is exactly what the teacher does not need: acting out."

How can teachers manage stress? Listed below are some strategies to help you get through.

- Socialize - spending time with family and friends even for an hour can help you regain perspective on you life. Talking to colleagues can show you everyone gets stressed. Find out how they handle their stress.
- Exercise - Move, stretch, and breathe deeply during the day. At home, go for a 15-20 minute walk. Exercise increases blood flow to vital organs and delivers oxygen to the brain. This enable you to think more clearly and cope with stress.



- Live in the present instead of comparing it to the past.
- Avoid drama as much as possible. Overreacting and exaggerating increase anxiety and drain energy.
- Meditate, practice deep breathing, or do a spiritual practice that has meaning for you.
- Cultivate a hopeful attitude by saying encouraging things to yourself.
- Don't blame yourself for unexpected changes or events.

Plan something you can look forward to every day.

Find a fun stress reliever such as the ones following:

- Play a game on your computer for a few minutes
  - Read a good book
  - Laugh
  - Discover a hobby such as, gardening, drawing or a favorite sport
  - Listen to music
  - Plan a mini-vacation
- Get a massage

Stress is part of life so teachers will always have their conflicts and anxiety in the classroom. It's normal. Stress relief for teachers can be achieved by finding alternatives and making adjustments.





# USING TECHNOLOGY FROM HOME

Being a teacher means your day does not end when the students go home. There is a never ending list of things to do including lesson plans, updating grades, and communicating with colleagues. Much of this can be done from the comfort of your home by simply logging into Citrix from outside the district. The procedures for setting this up are listed

- below.
1. Open Internet Explorer and go to the website <https://apps.district148.net>
  2. Enter your credentials in the fields and then click the Log On button.
  3. If this is the first time you are accessing the Apps page from this computer, you will be prompted to install the Citrix client. After reading the agreement from the provided link,

- check the box if you agree to the terms. You can then click the download button.
4. Click on the Run button to begin installation.
5. Click the Run button again on the Security Warning.
6. The installation will go through a series of windows without user intervention. Once the installation is complete, you will receive the message "Installation completed successfully"

- Click OK to complete the installation .
7. If you are prompted to sign in, use your network credentials and then click the login button.
  8. After you have logged in, you will now see the applications that you have access to.
- Remember however, the apps page from outside the district is for staff use only. Please do not direct students to that site.

## TEACHER TO TEACHER



**Avoiding Teacher Burnout**  
 Practical Tips for Avoiding Burnout

Teaching has got to be one of the top 5 most stressful careers in the world. In a single hour, we can play many different roles: nurse, babysitter, counselor, parent, and if we're lucky, educator.

How can we quit our complaining and attempt to avoid serious burnout? Try these strategies for avoiding burnout and make concrete improvements in your attitude and outlook in the classroom.

**Ask for Help-**Sometimes this can be a really hard one to do. Often, it seems far easier to just do it yourself than to explain how something should be done. Parents, friends, and even students can be a valuable time-

saving resource in your classroom, but only if you take the time to ask them. With a little planning and time invested up front, you can set up routine times and duties for the people available around you.

**Don't Sweat the Small Stuff-**This is a big piece of advice that applies in all areas of life. But, in teaching, we really need to put things in perspective. Some things that don't fall into the teaching/ imparting knowledge category just may not be worth your time and effort.

**Take Time for Yourself-** Watch a stupid sitcom, listen to "un-teachery" music, talk to an old friend on the phone, and forget about the

papers that need to be graded that evening. There is always tomorrow.

Obviously, we can't do these things all the time. But, try not to beat yourself up over it, if you do something fun once in awhile.

**Remember Why You Teach-**Look past all of the annoyances and hassles, both big and small, and remember why you became a teacher. Keep your reasons for teaching close to your heart and you'll realize that all of the stress really can be worth it