



SUCCESS
Guide
FOR
Teachers

WELCOME TO TEACHING...

AND, WELCOME BACK

Whether you're stepping into your own classroom for the first time, or you're a seasoned veteran, there are still lots of things to keep track of when it comes to teaching. This guide is a compilation of relevant information for teachers at any stage of their careers.

Keep this guide handy as a reference for information on certification, mentoring and assessment. You'll also find information on professionalism, parent-teacher relations, classroom management and other topics that might be of interest.

For many of you, this information will be a review, but it's always good to have a refresher. Information geared toward new teachers, such as working with a mentor, will be toward the front. If you're nearing retirement, there will be more information toward the back. In between, there's plenty of information that applies to everyone. Information about MSTA's services is also toward the back.

We hope this is helpful and that you have a great year.



SUCCESS GUIDE FOR TEACHERS

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CONTACTING MST A

Call MST A headquarters office toll-free by dialing 800-392-0532. For employment-related legal matters call legal services toll-free at 866-343-6186.



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MISSION STATEMENT

The Missouri State Teachers
Association advocates for and
empowers public educators
so they can teach.

SMSTA

Get involved with other college students pursuing a degree in education. There are chapters at colleges and universities across the state. You will have the opportunity to network and grow in your chosen profession. Learn more at msta.org/smsta or contact Krista Meyer at kmeyer@msta.org.

New Professionals

Are you a teacher in your first seven years of teaching? MSTA is ready to help you through the early years of your career. Each summer there is a special networking opportunity at the New Professionals Training Camp. Teachers have the chance to get away from the classroom and learn from seasoned veterans and share ideas with peers at Bunker Hill in July. Contact Krista Meyer at kmeyer@msta.org for more information about this new group.

MSTA's Code of Professional Ethics

Student

We believe our first obligation is to the students entrusted to our care.

We believe the purpose of education is to develop each individual for his or her fullest participation in the American democratic society, to pursue truth and to seek excellence. We will accept the responsibility of taking the initiative to eliminate all barriers that prevent full access to this unique education for all.

Profession

We believe academic freedom is inherent in, and essential to, the teaching profession.

We believe that for students to learn, teachers must be free to teach.

We believe every educator should have a broad general education, a depth of preparation in special areas and a mastery of knowledge and skills.

We believe an educator should be endowed with a thorough understanding of professional ethics, should possess a zeal for continuous self-improvement and should be imbued with a sense of moral and professional responsibility.

Community

We believe every educator has a right and a responsibility to be an informed and active citizen.

We believe that if school is to relate to the students, teachers must understand the community and the home environment of all students.

We believe free public education is an integral part of the community it serves, and we shall encourage the development of educational opportunities for all.

We believe the continuation of our free nation and its strength and well-being are dependent on free public education.



FROM STUDENT TO SUCCESSFUL TEACHER

After you graduate and walk into your classroom, the world has different expectations. You need to conduct yourself differently at your teaching job than you did while working in college. Read and follow your district's guidelines for teacher conduct.

In addition to those rules, here's a crash course in keeping it professional:

- **Avoid the gossip mill.** It might seem like a harmless way to bond with co-workers, but angering the wrong person can hurt your career. It will also make you look immature, and your co-workers could shun you.
- **Be respectful when discussing religion, politics and other personal beliefs with your colleagues.** They feel as strongly about their beliefs as you do about yours.
- **Don't discuss your sex life, the sex life of co-workers or anyone else.** Most people don't want to hear it, and it could result in a sexual harassment complaint.
- **Carefully consider the situation before you jump into romantic involvement with a colleague.** It may be allowed, but that doesn't make it a good idea.
- **Nothing you post online is truly private.** Put nothing online that you wouldn't want your mother, a prospective employer or your students to see.

All-new two-year Beginning Teacher Assistance Program

The Missouri Beginning Teacher Assistance Program is a two-year process that offers extended guidance and resources to help new educators thrive in their teaching journey. MSTa remains committed to providing high-quality opportunities for teachers to fulfill these standards.



New State Statute BTAP Requirements

- **Onsite or online BTAP course**
- **Successive Quarterly Learning for 2 years**
- **Focused Learning Domains:**
 - ♦ Classroom Manager and Community Builder
 - ♦ Instructional Designer and Facilitator of Student Thinking and Learning:
 - ♦ Professional
 - ♦ Reflective Learner



Why Choose MSTa's BTAP?

MSTa's BTAP aligns with the Missouri Teacher Development System and state statute ensuring you meet all certification criteria at times that work with your busy schedule.

- **Onsite or Online BTAP Course**
- **Beyond the Book Club Book Studies**
- **On Demand Online Courses**
- **Mini-Course Combo**
- **Virtual New Teachers Summit**
- **Virtual Teacher Meetup**

Ready to Transform Your Teaching Career?

Join MSTa's BTAP and embark on a journey of mastery, confidence, and connectedness. For detailed information and to register, visit our BTAP page at msta.org/btap.

Embrace this opportunity with MSTa and mark the start of a fulfilling career brimming with achievement, growth, and connection.



Pre-registration is required at:

msta.org/For-Missouri-Educators/Professional-Learning/BTAPs

Registration fees for BTAPs: \$75 for MSTa members;
\$100 for non-MSTa members

For more information, call 800-392-0532.

SUCCESSFUL EVALUATIONS

Any time you start a new job, that first evaluation is always the scariest. It doesn't matter how well you prepared for your career in college or how much you love your students.

Sometimes people make mistakes, or things happen outside of their control. A good evaluator understands this and is interested in how you handle the situation and your reflection on how you might do things differently in the future.

Here are some tips to make sure you're ready for that first evaluation.

- **Be prepared.** Good lesson plans are a must in teaching. During new teacher orientation, your principal should share the lesson template for your new school. If that isn't discussed, ask about it. You could also ask veteran teachers at your grade level to share their lesson-plan format with you. This will help you determine what the principal will be expecting if he or she looks at your planning book.
- **Use a variety of evaluative tools.** Students do not need homework every night, but make sure that you use a variety of assessments to justify their grades.
- **Be open to constructive criticism and reflect upon what you can do better.** Your evaluation is intended to make you a better teacher, and becoming a great teacher takes time. If your principal tells you that you need to make some changes, it's not an indictment of you personally.

SUCCESSFUL MENTORING

A teaching job will introduce you to situations for which no college class could prepare you. To ease the transition, school districts must set up a mentoring program for new teachers. Mentors are there to give guidance and support. Below are some tips for making the most of the experience.



If you are the mentee...

- **Communicate.** The shared information is confidential by law, so feel free to discuss any professional issue with your mentor.
- **Ask for help when you need it.** Don't try to handle problems alone if you feel overwhelmed.
- **Meet regularly and prepare questions about teaching techniques, discipline, lesson plans or other professional topics.** Since many districts require you to keep a record of your mentoring experience, record the dates of your meetings and the topics discussed.
- **Sit in some of your mentor's classes.** State standards require you to observe your mentor. Focus on different elements each time, such as your mentor's organization methods. Ask yourself why that method works.
- **Get feedback.** The state standard requires your mentor to observe you. Remember, your mentor is there for guidance, not evaluation.
- **Unfortunately, some relationships just don't work.** If you have problems with your mentor, stay with it for at least a month. If it's possible to request a new mentor, think it over carefully. A new mentor may not necessarily be a better one — and you risk earning a reputation for being difficult.

If you are the mentor...

When is a teacher ready to mentor?

Missouri suggests a minimum of four years of teaching experience or a retired educator. Mentors should exhibit strong instructional skills, be eager to share ideas, and be comfortable with a coaching role.

How much time should I spend mentoring?

That depends on district requirements, however it is important to remember mentoring is about support. Support may occur in a formal planned meeting or informally via email, phone calls, or casual chats. New teachers must have a mentor for two years.

How often will I be meeting with my mentee?

Frequency depends on needs of new teachers and district requirements and expectations.

- **Guidelines with a first-year/novice teacher:**
As much as possible before school starts; daily during the first month of school; two to three times a week during the first semester; at least once a week in the second semester.

- **Guidelines with a second-year or new-to-district teacher:** As much as possible before school starts; two to three times during the first week; once a week the rest of the year; more as needed.

What should we cover in our meetings?

- School and community culture.
- Communicating with colleagues and parents.
- Curriculum, instruction and assessments.
- Time and classroom management.
- Student interactions, including a system for getting to know students as learners and people, and keeping a professional relationship.
- Balancing personal and professional life.

What if I don't get along with my mentee?

If it just isn't a good fit, speak to the professional development committee chair or PDC building rep or person in charge of mentoring. The feeling is probably mutual, and it's better to get someone else than make life miserable for both.

What if I don't feel my mentee is doing a good job?

- Be proactive, initiate a conversation; suggest co-developing a lesson.
- Model good instruction. Have the mentee watch you or another experienced teacher.
- Speak candidly if your mentee shares concerns with you.
- A mentor also has a duty to the district. If you have concerns about a new teacher's abilities, you should talk to the principal, and suggest he or she do classroom observations.

What do I need to know about confidentiality?

The mentor and mentee have a confidential relationship. If that trust is broken, it's bad news for everyone. The mentor should not share notes with administrators. Mentors can make general suggestions for observations but not specifics unless a mentee is breaking the law or endangering a student.

For more about mentoring, inquire about MSTa's Mentoring Frameworks and MSTa's Mentoring Support Guide at 800-392-0532.

A hand is shown writing the number '10' on a dark green chalkboard. The words 'TOP' and 'FOR NEW TEACHERS' are already written in large, light green, blocky letters on the left side of the board.

TOP 10

FOR NEW TEACHERS

By Pam Clifton

Congratulations on becoming a teacher! Now, it's about to become very real very quickly when you walk into a special place called... your classroom! Your new job will be exciting, exhausting, overwhelming, rewarding and so much more all at once. Take this advice from an experienced teacher to help you survive your first day and beyond as a new teacher.

1. **Procedures** – Learn where everything is in the school (restrooms, counselor's office, teacher resource room, library, cafeteria, computer labs, resource rooms, etc.). Get copies of the student and teacher handbooks and read them carefully. Obtain a copy of your grade-level standards. Read these thoroughly and note any specific standards that you do not understand. Learn the names of the teachers and support staff. The school website or teacher webpages are helpful to learn information regarding colleagues and their classrooms, the school and more. Create a list of short, specific and age-appropriate classroom rules. These should be posted inside the classroom. Prepare a list of actions with consequences for students who break the rules (follow the student handbook, if possible). This helps to maintain positive classroom behavior and consistency.
2. **Item organization** – Set up your room. Organize the teacher's and student desks, additional seating areas, location of student and teacher supplies, learning centers, manipulatives, textbooks and other resources, etc. Everything needs its own specific location including trash cans, backpacks, paper trays, library books, pencil sharpener and more.
3. **Paperwork** – Every paper must be "filed" immediately, whether it's in a filing cabinet, on the teacher's desk, in a student-accessible area, recycling bin and so on. Where will you place students' homework? Graded work? Absentee and homebound work? Notes from parents? Special education and health-related student information (which must be kept confidential)? Labeled trays are helpful for immediate organization. Consider day-of-the-week folders, a labeled file-folder system or a large sorter (shelf with multiple small compartments similar to mail slots).
4. **Displays** – Create display areas for student work on bulletin boards (use basic black or white backgrounds and rotate borders and student work); content-area posters; class rules, emergency procedures and transportation information; menus and announcements; daily objectives; special classes schedule; and more.
5. **Teacher resources** – A seating chart and substitute folder (with emergency lesson plans, student roster, daily schedule, recess procedures, etc.) are essential. A gradebook is another necessary item, whether it's a spiral-bound book or online tool. Either of these may involve recording student names and other information or setting up classes.
6. **Detailed lessons** – Often teachers are surprised at the extensive amount of time it takes to prepare detailed and effective lesson plans. Write your plans for at least the first week. Be sure to include get-to-know-you activities and allow time for classroom rules and procedures discussion. Have copies made for at least the first week. Overplan lessons and include extra activities. This allows for flexibility in time management. Be sure to thoroughly think through each day's objectives and activities. Prepare explanations and easy-to-understand examples. Keep detailed records and notes for improvement. Constant and continued reflection is an important part of improvement as a teacher.
7. **Basic supplies** – Sometimes teachers' frustrations are the result of students being unprepared. Having extra supplies such as pencils, erasers, notebook paper, tape, stapler, scissors and more on hand keeps the focus on academics instead of on supplies (or lack of).
8. **Personal preparation** – Prepare yourself not only for the first day of school but also the school year. Always arrive early, with a smile and a positive attitude. An upbeat mood and a sense of energy will decrease the severity of setbacks and help encourage creativity. For long-term planning, use a calendar to record all dates (quarter and semester ending dates, field trips and incentives, school activities and more). Create your own personal survival kit to keep at school near your desk area (healthy snacks, mints, bottled water, pain reliever, bandages, safety pins, sunscreen, lip balm, hand sanitizer and wipes, whistle, umbrella). You'll be so glad to have these items on hand during an emergency or when you're starving and working late, have an excruciating headache or draw after-school duty bus or pick-up in the rain.
9. **Communicate** – It's important to communicate with students, parents and colleagues regarding your students. Collaboration between teachers and parents is essential in students' success. Creating an open path of communication encourages parents to approach you when they have issues or questions, and it gives you the same opportunity to reach out to them. Calling parents or mailing a letter home before the first day of school is a good way to welcome your new students and parents to your classroom. Emails, calls, letters, post cards, newsletters, meetings and even texts are great methods to maintain this communication throughout the year. Include learning objectives and goals, test dates, project due dates and scoring guides, calendars, classroom reminders, student spotlight and more.
10. **Expect success** – Believe in yourself and in students. Treat each person as a valued member of your classroom. Expect each person to contribute to lessons, discussions, group activities and more. When you, the teacher, offer confidence, support and hope to your students, they grow into stronger individuals.

Pam Clifton teaches sixth-grade English Language Arts and reading at West County Middle School in West St. Francois Co. R-4.

SUCCESSFUL CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

When it comes to managing your students, attitude is more important than strategy.



by Tobin Layton The biggest challenge I have faced in my career has been managing my classroom. I have read numerous articles and books offering suggestions for management games or discipline systems. However, I have learned that no strategy is effective without some basic attitudes toward classroom management.

What follows are my “trade secrets” of classroom management.

An ounce of prevention...

A lot of misbehavior can be avoided with a few simple preventive measures. Organize your classroom for adequate traffic flow, elbow room and access to supplies. Create strategic seating arrangements and rearrange students often to mix things up.

Arrange your schedule with your unique group in mind. Are they rowdy after lunch? Plan a calm-down activity for that time slot. If possible, schedule your core subjects to take advantage of your students’ most productive hours.

During the introduction to each activity, mention potential problems and have students come up with possible solutions. Plan lessons that are engaging, but not frustrating, and always have extra work for early finishers. In my classroom, we brainstorm a list of “I’m bored” activities and post them on the wall.

More important than how you run your classroom is how you conduct yourself. While every teacher is going to face a little disobedience, those who are beloved by their students tend to get a



little less. Develop a rapport with your students. This does not mean that you are their buddy. Maintain a healthy balance between camaraderie and respect.

Nip habitual problems

Some behaviors are hard to stop once you allow them to start. For this reason, it is imperative that you set the tone for your classroom environment in the first days of school.

First, demand students' attention. Refuse to talk over them. If anyone is talking, whispering or not paying attention, stop mid-word and calmly stare at the offending party until they catch on. When you have everyone's attention, proceed as though nothing happened. Without saying a word, you have demonstrated your expectations. It won't take long for students to realize they have little choice but to pay attention. If they choose not to, not only will they "hear" about it from you, but also from their impatient peers.

Choose your battles

Before you dish out discipline, ask yourself: Is it disruptive, or just annoying to me? Would a good-natured joke accomplish the same purpose? ("Hmmm. That's a creative use for a rubber band! Why don't you see what it can do on my desk?")

Does the student know what he is doing is wrong? If so, will a "teacher look" or hand on the shoulder accomplish the same as a lecture and punishment? If not, a simple and kind explanation of the rule may do the trick. By reserving a scolding as the last resort, you will save yourself undue stress and preserve the dignity of your students. Further, if you do have to dish out a harsh word or two, it will have that much more impact.

Keep your purpose in mind

The goal of discipline is to keep an offense from happening again. If you keep that in mind, it will guide your handling of devious behavior.

I rarely give lunch detention as a punishment to my frequent offenders. I try to dole out a consequence that is instant and logical. Students who shove in the lunch line must sit and wait to be served last.

Try to avoid sending students to the principal's office except in the case of very serious offenses. You want the students to know that you will handle any

behavior that occurs on your watch. You also want a trip down the hall to be a big deal, not a frequent journey.

When developing an effective classroom management plan, attitude is much more important than strategy. If you consistently act with your ultimate goal in mind — to educate students and cause them to love learning — you will likely accomplish it.

Tobi Layton is an MSTA member and teacher in Woodland R-4. This is an abridged version of an article that ran in an earlier publication.

DISCIPLINE TIPS

Before devising your classroom discipline system, consider one question: How can I get my students to respect themselves, their peers and me? If respect, simplicity and clarity are at the heart of your discipline plan, you'll have a much easier year.

Here are five steps:

- Study the discipline procedures for your school or district. Know the procedures for assigning detentions, sending students to the office and contacting parents.
- Be clear about your expectations.
- Post a brief list of classroom rules — five or fewer — that are clear and concise. Make sure parents get a copy.
- Consistency and fairness are key. Applying the rules with consistency will earn respect from your students and prevent bad habits from becoming the norm. Make sure punishments are in proportion to the offense.
- Keep your cool when disciplining students. If you are upset, take a few minutes to collect yourself. Remind the student that he or she chose not to follow the rules and must accept the consequences of that choice. Once the incident is over, move on.



Toll-free direct line
to legal services:
866-343-6186

LEGAL Q&A

Your legal rights and responsibilities begin the day you enter school and extend to your retirement — so you need to know them. Here are a few common questions and answers for new teachers.

What should I know about my contract?

Your contract is a legally binding document that obligates you and the school district that hired you. Before you sign it, pay close attention to:

- Current placement (step plus hours) on salary schedule.
- Salary amount, payment schedule, benefits (subject to change based on board approval).
- Board policy, especially provisions regarding early release.
- Verify district policy on recognizing years of experience.
- Extra duties that may be required.

What should I know about probationary teachers and non-renewal?

A school board may decide not to renew a probationary teacher's contract at the end of the school year for any non-discriminatory reason or for any legal reason. The board must provide the teacher with written notice of its decision not to renew the probationary contract on or before April 15. A probationary teacher receiving proper notice of nonrenewal is not entitled to a due-process hearing.

If a district desires to terminate a probationary teacher during the school year, the teacher is entitled to certain due process protections including a hearing in front of the board and, in some cases, an opportunity to cure the deficiency.

When do I achieve tenure?

Teachers ordinarily achieve tenure in a school district when they begin working on their sixth consecutive contract in the district. Part-time employees accrue tenure on a pro rata basis.

School board policy: Can they do that?

Local school boards have broad discretion to establish policy (including salary and benefits policies) for their districts, and administrators have broad discretion in how they implement those policies. Few laws dictate the policy process.

However, the school board and the administration must comply with their own written board policies. If board policy does not address the issue, the administrator may well be operating within his or her legal limits.

How do I report suspected child abuse or neglect?

As a mandatory reporter you are required to immediately notify the Children's Division when you have reasonable cause to suspect abuse or neglect. Reports can be made 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by calling 844-CAN-TELL or online at <http://dss.mo.gov/cd/can.htm>

KEEP ON TOP OF LEGAL ISSUES.

Additional information regarding your employment rights and education-related legal issues can be found at www.msta.org/legal-services.

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education also offers information about school laws, rules and regulations at dese.mo.gov/schoollaw.

What should I do when there's trouble?

1. Document, document, document.

Any sign of trouble — an accident, confrontation with a colleague or parent, job target, threat of disciplinary action — should be documented at your first opportunity. Write it down. Who was involved or present as a witness? What happened? When and where did it occur? Why did you take the action you did or react in the manner you did? You may never need this information, but it will be there if you have to explain your action later.

2. Go through the chain of command. If

you have a disagreement or problem with a co-worker or supervisor, address the issue first with the person directly. The goal is to resolve disputes at the lowest administrative level possible. Your credibility with the next-level administrator will be enhanced if you resist the urge to do an end-run around the chain of command.

3. Call the MSTA Legal Services Department to find out your rights in the situation and suggestions on the best course of action you may take to protect yourself.

The information contained here is for educational purposes only; it does not constitute legal advice, and its use does not create an attorney-client relationship. If you have a confidential legal matter to discuss, please contact the Legal Services Department at 866-343-6186.



LEGAL ISSUES- REPUTATION AND PERCEPTION

by Scott Smith MSTA staff attorney

When it comes to the reputation and job security of a teacher, the perception held by the community and administration is almost as important as the actual character and actions of the teacher. In addition to making the right decision, it is important to think about how your actions will be perceived by the school and community. Taking steps to help others understand your decision-making process can reduce communication gaps and improve relationships.

Even when you have the best intentions, like giving a student in need a ride home, it's important to remember that you are putting yourself in a risky position by being alone with a student. While you are simply doing a favor, it leaves you vulnerable to questions and concerns from others as to what your true intentions are.

How students perceive you is also important – standing too close or directly above a student who is sitting down may make the student uncomfortable. Touching a student on the shoulder who has previously expressed his or her discomfort can send the wrong message as well.

Perceptions when communicating also play a key role in reputation. Being careful about your tone and demeanor when having stressful conversations can help maintain a positive work environment and prevent people from assuming the worst about your thoughts and intentions. Understanding, flexibility and compromise can show others you genuinely want to solve the problem at hand. Slowing down the situation and carefully thinking through what you are going to say will help you avoid saying something you might regret. When faced with a difficult decision, being proactive by speaking to your school district about your thought process can show them you are taking the matter seriously and doing your best to help everybody involved.

Making the right decision in a difficult situation comes first, but it is important to think about the repercussions of your decision, and how others might perceive it.



SUCCESSFUL PERSONAL PROFESSIONAL FILES

Every teacher should create his/her own personal file for all the most important paperwork related to your career. A professional file has several functions: It is a portfolio, a storage space for important documents and a place to stash fond memories. Keep the professional file in a personal space in case of loss of access to your classroom or district issued computer files/emails. You can use a collapsible file or a small file box for your professional file. Here are five items every teacher should include.

FIVE ESSENTIALS

Evaluations

Keep copies of any evaluation you receive. If an administrator asks you to sign an evaluation, your signature indicates only that you've read the evaluation and not that you agree with it. If you receive a job target (also called a professional growth plan or a professional improvement plan), you may submit a formal response. Keep a copy of that as well. It's also useful to have a copy of your evaluation cycle, so you can date and mark off events as they occur.

Contracts, etc.

Put a copy of every contract you sign into your file. It's also a good idea to include your district's salary schedule, your certification papers and your college transcript.

Positive communication

Cards and positive notes can be lifesavers if you ever come under fire. It's always impressive when an educator can produce a file packed with testimonials from satisfied parents and students. Plus, they're nice to read when you're having a bad day.

Required documentation for certification

Once you receive your Initial Certificate you must meet certain requirements to upgrade to the Career Continuous Certificate. It is suggested to maintain copies of these documents for future reference.

- Keep a copy of your Beginning Teacher Assistance Program letter.
- Document and keep proof you participated in a mentoring program.
- Keep a copy of your professional development log and maintain copies of your yearly professional development plan.

Legal/liability protection

If something unusual happens, jot down details while they're fresh in your mind. For instance, if a parent-teacher conference doesn't go well, record what happened. Teachers must be lawsuit-conscious, so be prepared by keeping concise, complete records.

If anything happens that triggers liability concerns, make a detailed report that includes the time, date, place, people involved, witnesses and a description of the incident.



CERTIFICATION FACTS

HOW DO I GET CERTIFIED?

Missouri has several ways that individuals can join the education profession. The most prominent methods to earning an initial certificate are below.

Traditional Route: A person completes a bachelor's degree in education, does student teaching, and passes an exit exam.

Alternative or Innovative Route:

A person with a bachelor's degree in a content area, such as mathematics, enrolls in a college of education. The teacher works under a two-year provisional certificate while completing about 30 semester hours. To receive certification, the person must also pass an exit exam.

Temporary Authorization Route:

A person with a bachelor's degree in a content area takes self-directed courses to meet specified competencies (with a maximum of 24 college credits), teaches for two years while being mentored by the school district and passes at least two exit exams. This person works under a one-year renewable certificate that requires nine semester hours of college credit each year to be renewed.

American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence Route:

In 2008, this method was approved for people seeking certification in middle or high school math, U.S. and world history, English/language arts, biology, chemistry, general science, physics and elementary education. Recipients must hold a bachelor's degree, pass a background check, pass the ABCTE Professional Teaching Knowledge Exam and pass an ABCTE exam in the candidate's subject area.

Doctoral Route

Individuals with a doctorate degree in a content area (such as mathematics or English) may be issued an initial certificate by passing the 063 professional knowledge: Secondary assessment. For more information please visit the Missouri Educator Gateway. Individuals entering via the doctoral route are not eligible to advance to the career certificate but may renew the initial certificate as often as needed.

What is an initial certificate?

This is a four-year license issued to new college graduates and others with fewer than four years of teaching experience. To maintain this certificate, and apply for a career continuous certificate, you must:

- Complete four years of teaching as defined by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.
- Develop and implement a professional-development plan.
- Undergo two years of mentoring.
- Complete 30 contact hours of professional development in four years.
- Participate in a Beginning Teacher Assistance program, (BTAP), such as those offered by MSTA. This does not count toward professional development hours.
- Receive a yearly performance evaluation.

What happens after that?

Your district will verify that you have completed the requirements for upgrading your initial certificate to a career continuous certificate. You and the district will jointly complete the application. Applications must be completed within 30 days of the expiration date of classification.

What is a career continuous certificate?

This is a 99-year teaching license that requires an individual to maintain a professional-growth plan, have successful performance-based evaluations, and annually report professional development to DESE. Those who complete two of the three following requirements will be exempt from the professional-growth requirement:

- Complete 10 years of teaching.
- Complete a master's degree.
- Obtain national certification from an agency recognized by DESE.

What if I'm from out-of-state?

If you have a valid teaching certificate from another state, you may be eligible to receive a comparable certificate in Missouri from the State Board of Education.

Additional information

American Board for Certification
of Teacher Excellence

abcte.org

Department of Elementary and Secondary
Education certification site:

dese.mo.gov/educator-quality/certification

Click the "view certification status" tab to check the status of your individual teaching certificate. You'll need your Social Security number.

Questions?

Call DESE's Certification Department at 573-751-0051.



FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Tips for positive home-school partnerships relations

Establishing relationships with your students' families are just as important as the relationships you build within the walls of your classroom. Here's some tips to strengthen those connections all through the year:

- Before school starts, mail a postcard to each student. Write a bit about yourself and welcome them to your classroom.
- Send home a questionnaire to ask the family whether they'd like to volunteer and what talents they might be able to offer.
- Keep the lines of communication open all year. This can be accomplished through email newsletters or a classroom website.
- Be positive in all interactions with the family. Focus on solutions to problems their children may be having. If caregivers feel comfortable with you, they will be more receptive to your concerns if things get rocky.

Six tips for productive parent-teacher conferences

1. Plan ahead. Have a general plan of what you're going to say. Include the student's academic strengths and needs. Then, propose a plan of action, and be prepared for questions.
2. Be aware of the diverse needs of your students' families. Offer flexible time choices. Invite all parents and/or caregivers, and be sure to get their names right. Don't assume Jane Doe's mother is Mrs. Doe.
3. Be sure not to create a physical barrier between you and the family. Come out from behind your desk for the conference.
4. Share examples of the student's work. Begin the conference with a warm, positive statement about the child's abilities, work or interests. Or, empower students to help lead using student led conferences.
5. Be deliberate in your comments. Use specific examples and focus on solutions and goals. Get caregiver input and emphasize collaboration.
6. Achieve closure. Summarize the actions that you and the family have agreed to take. End on an optimistic note.



MORE ON FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

GOOD NEWS FOR BAD GRADES

Q: The parents or guardian of a student in my class are upset because of the grade their child received. How can I defuse the situation?

A: Parents will confront you throughout your career, and there is no formula for handling them. Each person and situation is different.

However, when it comes to grades and grading practices, there are some strategies you can employ.

Be proactive. Present your grading policy and scale to families at the beginning of the school year. For those families who fail to attend back-to-school activities, send the policy home and require a signature be returned for your records. Also, be sure to post the policy in the classroom and, if you have one, on the class website.

Remove barriers. Require your students to have graded quizzes, tests and major projects initialed or signed by a parent. Make a copy of these documents for your records before allowing students to keep them.

Report regularly. Student information systems have an app available for families to access. Ensure families are

aware of the app so they can monitor their student's grades as soon as they have been updated.

Stay connected. If a student is falling behind on assignments, struggling to understand key concepts, or experiencing changes in study habits be sure to stay connected with families. Working together early on will aide in getting the student back on the path for success.

Consult your administrator. Make your principal aware of students who are falling short of your expectations. The best way to get an administrator in your corner is to inform him or her of your efforts with students and families.

Admittedly, a regimen like the one outlined here can be a lot of work. But once students and families become accustomed to the structure, you'll find that communication about grades will become a more positive experience for you and for them.

If this advice comes too late for your work with particular caregivers this year, immediately consult your administrator. Once you've solicited his or her help to appease the upset family member, consider designing a plan to prevent similar episodes. You'll be grateful you did!

TESTING

Missouri students participate in end-of-year assessments administered online. Designated grades include performance events in the test (see chart below). Performance tasks can take three to four hours to complete. Missouri has separate testing requirements for the K-8 and high school levels. Please consult with your district testing coordinator for further information.

MAP procedures

The MAP tests will be given to students in grades three through eight in math and English language arts. Students in grades five and eight will take the science MAP.

Students with severe disabilities take the MAP-Alternate, or MAP-A. This assessment is not a pencil-and-paper exam, but is based on a portfolio that evaluates a student's success in learning everyday living skills. A student's Individualized Education Plan team decides whether students will take this test. The MAP-A also applies to high school students who qualify. These students undergo their math, English language arts and science assessments in grade 11.

The state's annual testing window takes place every spring. Testing windows are sometimes extended at the state level due to unusual circumstances such as inclement weather.

Student performance is reported in terms of four performance (or achievement) levels that describe a pathway to proficiency. Each achievement level represents standards of performance for each assessed content area; achievement levels describe what students can do in terms of the content and skills on the assessment. The performance standards and indicators are used to generate a district's Annual Performance Review (APR). This is the means of accountability for districts within MSIP 5.

End-of-course assessments

High school students undergo testing, but the program is tied to courses taken, rather than grade level. English language arts and math EOCs will assess student progress toward the Missouri Learning Standards.

THE MAP BY GRADE LEVEL ASSESSMENT						
Grade	3	4	5	6	7	8
Math	●	●	●	●	●	●
Math performance tasks	●	●	●	●	●	●
English language arts	●	●	●	●	●	●
English language arts performance tasks		●				●
Science			●			●
MAP-A	●	●	●	●	●	●

Information current as of the 2024-25 school year. SOURCE: DESE

End-of-course exams are given to students in the following classes, on dates specified by DESE:

- Algebra I (required)
- Algebra II (available at district cost)
- American History (available at no cost)
- Biology (required)
- English I (available at district cost)
- English II (required)
- Geometry (available at district cost)
- Government (required)
- Personal Finance (available at no cost)
- Physical Science (available at district cost)



Algebra 1 and biology will include a performance event. English 2 students will again have a writing prompt session. These tests are designed for three- to four-hour periods, but will not be timed and teachers may give students additional time to finish if necessary.

All tests have an estimated time ranging from 55-110 minutes. Assessments are administered online.

District test coordinators will receive students' raw scores so that teachers can factor results into students' course grades. DESE recommends student scores count for 10 to 25 percent of their course grades, but advises districts to establish a policy on how the scores should be considered in grading. School districts must ensure that students take the EOC exams, but DESE has not established a passing score. Passage of the tests will not be a graduation requirement.

End-of-high-school assessments

EOHS assessments will be administered for English and mathematics. DESE has no intention to make graduation dependent on any test.

Visit dese.mo.gov/college-career-readiness/assessment/guide-missouri-assessment-program for full information, including test dates, examiner training, updated assessment resources and the revised MSIP5 High School Assessment Plan.



SUCCESSFUL SUBBING

If you're the teacher ...

There will be times when you must be absent. Provide your substitute with a folder that includes the following:

- A schedule with the names of students who must leave the classroom regularly for speech therapy, to take medication, etc. Be sure to include the names and schedules of classroom aides and volunteers.
- Class list and seating charts.
- Absentee procedures
- Detailed lesson plans and the location of all materials needed.
- Utilize platforms such as Flipgrid to record videos with directions. Give students access to the videos on the day of planned absences.
- Extra work for students who finish assignments early.
- Classroom rules and discipline procedures.
- A list of dependable students who can help with errands.
- Name and location of a teacher to call upon for assistance.
- Building floor plan, including the location of restrooms.
- Emergency procedures.

If you're the substitute ...

If you're the sub, here are a few tips on how to make your day more effective.

- Keep a file on each of the schools in which you sub. Include rule books, a school map, copies of hall passes and discipline referral forms.
- Arrive early. Review the lesson plans, and locate books, handouts, hall passes, lunch cards and bathrooms before the students arrive. Check the equipment you'll be using.
- Get organized. Create a five- to 10-minute mini-lesson that covers the work students will be doing.
- Check the room for management systems. If you understand the teacher's system, use it. If not, use your own.
- Keep a three-ring binder of teaching reproducibles and activities. If students finish their work early, pull out one of your lessons or worksheets. Preparation prevents chaos.
- Learn the names of a few students right away. They will be able to help if something goes wrong.
- Leave the teacher a detailed note of what you did during the day. In this note, ask the teacher to request you as a sub in the future.



SOCIAL NETWORKING

Employers in many professions pay close attention to staffers' digital footprints, but teachers can fall into a special category. Educators are often held to a higher community standard than the average working stiff, and need to take extra care to make sure their social networking activities are up to snuff.

Here are some tips to creating a positive online presence:

1. Check the policies for your school or district. Before you do anything, make sure it falls within the rules.
2. Know your privacy settings. Most websites offer varying levels of privacy for users. Facebook, for example, allows users several levels of privacy for each photo, status update or other posting, from "everyone," to "friends only." Users can even customize postings to be visible only to certain people on their friends list.
3. Be careful about what you post. Even at the strongest privacy settings, your postings could still become visible to others. Someone could see your posting via a friend's account if that friend uses her laptop or phone in a public place. If you want to complain about your coworkers or brag about how many tequila shots you did last night, don't do it on any online network.
4. Know your friends. Some websites, like LinkedIn, are geared for purely professional networking, while others, like Facebook, are designed more for personal use but can have professional applications. Consider why you have joined a certain site and manage your contacts and activities accordingly.
5. Don't "friend" your students. There are ways to involve your students in social networking, such as setting up a classroom blog or wiki that is visible to everyone. Some teachers have set up a Facebook fan page for their classroom that allows them to communicate with students and parents. But again, make sure you check your local board policy before creating anything on social networks that includes your student.
6. Once you set your privacy filters, log out of your account and search for yourself. Make sure that what you see is what you want to be visible. Also you should regularly search for yourself on Google or other search engines.
7. Practice good social-networking hygiene. Revisit your account settings periodically. Check what you've posted. Are you still happy with it? If not, remove photos or videos that do not represent how you want to be seen. Remember: If you wouldn't want your boss or your grandmother to see it, take it down.

NEW TEACHERS SUPPORT SERVICES

Start your career with support from MSTA. These tools are available for new teachers:

Beginning Teacher Assistance Program (BTAP)

MSTA helps new teachers fulfill the BTAP certification requirement with its Beginning Teacher Assistance Program. These BTAPs take place in day-long sessions at locations around the state or in an online program that allows new teachers to learn at their convenience. Participants of both the onsite and online programs must take part in quarterly, ongoing learning for two years. This can be through book studies, online courses, mini-course combo, virtual teacher meet-up, or participating in MSTA's Virtual New Teachers Summit. Register for both at msta.org/events. To see a list of on-site BTA Programs throughout the year, visit the Events section of msta.org.

Beyond the Book: MSTA's Professional Book Club

MSTA's Beyond the Book is a book club for educators at all stages of their career. Each month, participants explore a different book that highlights current pedagogy and instructional practices. An online platform is used, as well as virtual meetings where participants share their insights and experiences and reflect on the application of the learned principles and practices in their classroom. A final core project is completed applying what is learned to one's instruction practice.

MSTA's Extended "Beyond the Book" Club

MSTA's Extended "Beyond the Book" Club follows a similar format to the original "Beyond the Book" Club but extends the time of the study. The extended offering allows participants **quarterly or a semester** to read and complete the tasks related to the book, including one virtual meeting a month. The book choices offered in this format will all be related to classroom management, behavior, and/or trauma-informed practices. Just like the original "Beyond the Book" club, participants must purchase their own books.

Virtual Teacher Meetup



Connect with fellow educators across Missouri in the second, third, and fourth quarters. These sessions are led by teacher leaders from throughout the state and will group participants by grade spans—elementary, middle, high school, and special areas—fostering a supportive community to enhance your professional growth.

Mini-Course Series

The Mini-Course Series consists of various pre-recorded webinars that allow participants to watch the webinar of their choice and then take a short quiz. Upon successful completion of the quiz, a certificate of completion documenting 0.5 hours of professional learning is issued. This is a great option for educators needing documentation of professional learning for Career Ladder or other requirements.

MSTA Virtual New Teacher Summit

Whether a new educator looking to fulfill BTAP requirements or a veteran teacher looking for enrichment opportunities, the Virtual New Teacher Summit will provide you with valuable resources. This event is a synchronous learning opportunity where participants can choose topics they want to learn more about. The Summit consists of three different sessions. Each session will showcase master teachers from across the state as they share best practices. For each session, participants can choose from a variety of topics such as student engagement, classroom management, and instructional design. Each breakout will be 50 minutes long with a 10-minute break in between sessions. The courses will be hosted through an interactive learning platform, in addition to the utilization of Zoom. The interactive format of the event will allow for intimate learning and an open space to network with fellow Missouri educators.

Professional Development Plan (PDP) assistance

Your mentor is probably the best source for answering your PDP questions. However, if you have additional questions, your MSTA member service coordinator can help. Visit msta.org for names and phone numbers, or call 800-392-0532.

Professional Learning Opportunities

MSTA offers a variety of trainings throughout the year and free workshops at our state convention. MSTA provides a variety of educational topics online for educators to individualize their professional learning. Visit our website msta.org or contact membercare@msta.org for more details.

Mentor training

MSTA offers mentor-training workshops to districts on request. You may request a workshop at 800-392-0532 or email professional_learning@msta.org.

30-Minute Webinars

MSTA recognizes time for teachers is a treasured commodity. For busy teachers, MSTA offers free 30-minute webinars on a variety of topics the first and third Tuesday of each month. Topics include instructional strategies, self-care, assessment, technology, and much more. To see a calendar of topics and to register, visit the Events section of msta.org

MSTA website

Our website is open 24/7 with information about our services, education news, grants and awards, podcasts and more. Visit us at msta.org.

MSTA Weekly Updates

Opt in for more support opportunities

Follow @MissouriTeachers

on TikTok for weekly TikTok Teacher Tips

Quarterly PD2GO (Printable PD)

You can find archived PD2GO on the MSTA website



SUCCESS OVER STRESS

Keeping burnout at bay requires a commitment to practices that put your needs first. Following are a few tips from mental health experts and Missouri teachers.

- Write about your stressors, anxieties and fears in a private journal.
- Find ways to improve physical and mental health (take a walk in nature, schedule time doing something just for you)
- Record things you are grateful for.
- Seek support from other teachers. Mentors and experienced teachers can offer advice and suggestions; new teachers can empathize with your plight.
- Every once in a while, take a short break from the “required” curriculum to discuss a topic that you particularly enjoy. It will be refreshing for you and your students.
- Get a good night’s sleep and avoid grading papers right before bed. Give your mind time to relax from the day before trying to go to sleep.
- Take time to laugh. Keep copies of your favorite comic strip, a cartoon calendar or other things that make you laugh at hand. Thumb through them when you need some comic relief.
- Take up a non-school activity that you can do for an hour or two a week. You’re going to be busy your first year, but look for something that you can do to turn off “teacher mode.” Think of painting, drawing, a pottery class, gardening and other hobbies.
- Be prepared. The best way to deal with stress is to prevent it from happening. Don’t keep tasks until the last minute, be proactive in classroom management and you’ll have a much easier year.

BE SUCCESSFUL TO THE END

Students get restless at the end of the year. They’re looking forward to their summer vacations and turning their attention to the outdoors as the weather gets warmer. It can be difficult to keep them on task. Here are a few tips to help you end the year smoothly:

- Keep your students to a routine as much as possible. If they know you’re serious about teaching until the end of the year, they’ll be more likely to learn until the end of the year.
- Keep students involved. Call them by name when presenting a lesson, ask them to explain the concept you just presented to the rest of the class, or have them write down three questions about the topic you’re studying.
- Keep the pace fast. It’s harder for students to sit and listen to long lectures at this time of year. Consider lessons that would benefit from this restlessness, such as outdoor projects.
- Be kind to yourself. Don’t assign a lot of work that has to be graded and entered and recorded. This will make it easier for you to finish all those last-minute things that come with wrapping up the year.
- Hang in there — and take some time during the summer to relax.



BUILDING SUCCESSFUL RELATIONSHIPS IN THE SPECIALS CLASSROOM

By Becky Fenton

Being a specialty area teacher at the elementary level affords one the opportunity of having every student in the building visit their classroom each week. However, the percentage of time specials teachers spend with their students each year is small, compared to that of classroom teachers. It is, therefore, important for specials teachers to find ways to build relationship with students and bridge the gap from week to week. Following are some suggestions for building and maintaining positive student/teacher rapport throughout the school year.

1. Greet every student at the door prior to having them enter the classroom. Try as you may, chances are you will not be able to connect with every student each time you have them for a class period. However, taking the time to greet every student at the door allows you to

make a connection, even before starting class. As the students enter, give them the choice of a hug, a handshake, a high-five, a fist-bump, or a smile. In doing this, you are communicating to the students that they are important to you. Additionally, this routine will allow you to get an



overall feel for the students before starting class, and will help you take note of any students that might need additional reminders or support that particular day.

2. Establish a beginning of class routine. Having a set procedure for beginning class is a great way for students to shift their focus to learning in your classroom. A simple reciting of the class mission statement, followed by a joke of the day or question of the day, provides positive interaction between you and your group of students prior to learning the content.

3. Praise, Praise, Praise! For some students, small attempts represent great success. While it is easy to take note of big achievements, take the time to celebrate the small successes with students. Sometimes, a small celebration is all a student needs to boost their confidence and take more ownership in the class. A simple statement of praise will go a long way in building rapport and trust between you and your student.

4. Make connections. When you find something out about a student (something they like, or something humorous about them), use that as an extension of your communication with them. For example, if you know a student loves baseball, use that as a talking point for meaningful interaction. Students love it when you remember things about them.

5. Remember their name! One of the greatest gifts you can give someone is to address them by their name. It makes them feel special and validated. Seating charts are a helpful tool for memorizing names.

6. Take the time to show students who you are. One of the best things I have found in building relationship is to be authentic. Share with them, when appropriate, about exciting moments in your life, stories, or past experiences. It is good for your students to be reminded that teachers are people, too.

7. Connect with students outside of the classroom. Most specials teachers will have assigned duties outside of their classroom (before school, cafeteria, etc.). Use that time to make extra connections with students. It could be something as simple as a "Good morning!", "How is your day?", or "See you tomorrow." Or, it could be something

more involved, such as listening to a story they want to share or a piece of art they are proud of and want to show you. Whatever the case, use your time outside of class to get to know your students in different venues. The smallest of interaction goes a long way, and it will make a lasting difference in your classroom.

8. Communicate with classroom teachers.

Maintaining open lines of communication between you and the classroom teacher will allow you insight as to how to build relationship with even the most difficult of students. Find out what is working for them in their classroom, ask about changes in a student's life, and see how you can use the information you gain to further strengthen your communication with your students.

9. Capitalize on student strengths. Students love to help in ways that interest them. Find out what students like to do and find ways to help them do it. If you have students who want to stay a few minutes after and straighten the room, allowing them to do so will give them ownership of the classroom and will make them want to do to their best when they come to your class.

10. Remind them of their worth. Finally, take the time to remind students that they are important to you, and that the class is better because of them. Remind them that they are a valued and respected part of the team. Remind them that they can, even when they think they can't, reiterating that your class is a safe place to try, and that small successes will be celebrated. It is true that students don't care how much you know, until they know how much you care. When students feel respected, validated, and cared for, the sky is the limit on what they can achieve.

Becky Fenton has been a music educator for 30 years, having taught at both the elementary and secondary levels. She has been with the Republic School district for 24 years where she teaches K-5 music. (The term "specials" is used to describe art, music, pe, librarians, and technology teachers.)



CONNECT WITH YOUR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

By Kevin Lay

So, there you are, in front of your students, and you can hear the echo of the veteran teachers that have taken you under their wing. Maybe you can hear the professor from your university classes giving you the advice that many others will share. Or that book that you read about developing relationships with students. Can you hear them? Are they telling you not to smile before Christmas? Or maybe they are letting you know it's better to be feared than loved or to never let students talk without raising their hand. Maybe some advice is coming from the opposite end of that spectrum: to let the students into your life, let everyone talk when they have something to say, or to let them sit and move whenever they want.

So, which one is right? What are you going to do when you start your classroom this year, or when you return from the summer break? Are you thinking about how perfect your classroom will be your first year? Are you hiding in the fetal position remembering some of the moments that you had in class last year and what you are set on doing this year? Here are some ideas to consider no matter what position you're in:

- **Be authentic, be you!** No one can be a better you, than... well, YOU! Own that dry sense of humor or those dad jokes. Are you an incredibly energetic teacher? Great! Are you a well-organized person that loves checklists? Then own that! Did you forget to post that important material on Google Classroom? Okay! Get it done when you have the chance to. When you share your quirks and mistakes with students, it lets them know that there will be an expectation of grace in your classroom, beginning with you, and extending to them, because you know that mistakes are made. And that's okay. The students will appreciate you being authentic and consistent – and the students that you serve are great at recognizing who you are. This may take a little while to figure out how this looks in your classroom and what you're comfortable with – and that is okay! Take your time, embrace the unique person that you've been gifted to be, and have some fun with it!
- **Always be conscious of your district's procedures, protocol, and code of conduct.** While we have our own wonderful characteristics and strengths, being in a high school classroom brings about a whole new set of behavioral standards and practices that some middle schools and elementary schools may not face. A lot of us LOVE hugs, and what's better than getting a hug from one of your students, right? What about a pat on the back, a letter, or a funny joke? While you are not being told that these can't be done, just give your administration the respect of knowing what is honored and acceptable in your school. Something that may seem so trivial to you could be an important piece that was developed before you arrived and for good reason. Have conversations with your principal, counselor, and school liaisons for any clarification that you may need.
- **Be at the door and be present – no matter what!** Whether it's shaking hands (use some hand sanitizer!), high fives, or just a simple hello with some eye-contact, be there to greet them. Yes, you're trying to get stuff done, maybe getting a last-minute slide prepared, or just a quick break – that's okay. But for those first few weeks of school, be at the door and make your smiling and welcoming face the first thing they see when they enter your classroom. Those other things can wait if it means that your students get to see you greeting them when they come into your room. The investment of time and effort is incredibly rewarding and is so worth it!

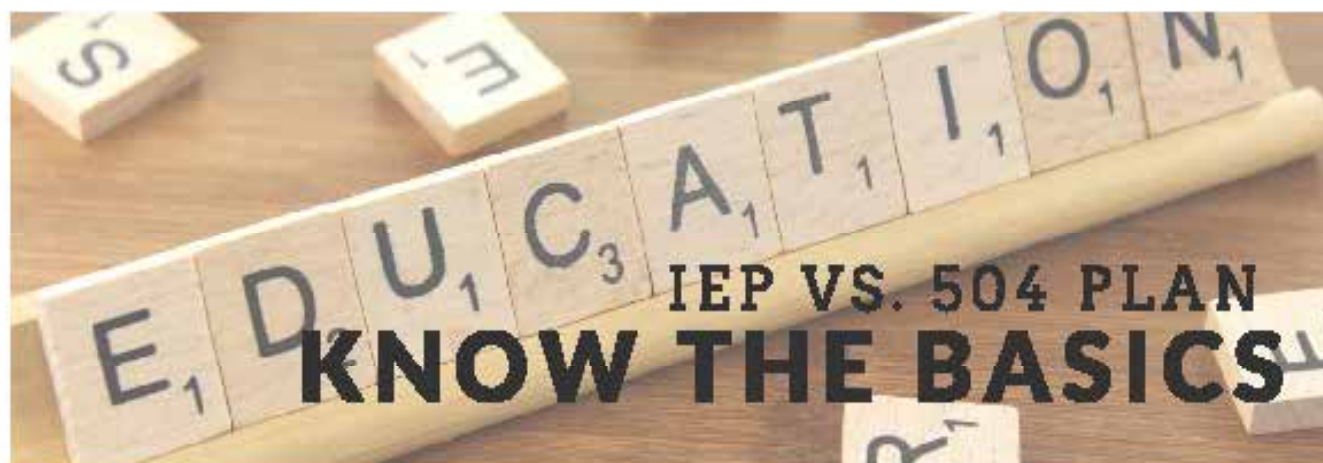
- **Ask what's going on in their lives, and then, listen!**

What you may hear is the beginning of an incredible story that they are letting you in on. It gives you a point to come back to time and time again. How will you model this? You can begin yourself! Share something good going on in your life, and then, open it up to your students. Whether you do this as a class or one on one, it could be the beginning of something special that they look forward to each and every day they are with you!

- **Know their names**—you can say you're bad with names all you want, but students want to know that you took the effort to remember THEM. Don't be the teacher that doesn't know their names and says, "Well, I'm just bad with names." They deserve this. Try and you will succeed.
- **Know that they don't need another friend.** They need someone who cares consistently, someone who is a strength in their life. You will not be confiding your deep personal troubles to a student about what's going on in your life, but they may be doing that to you. There's a reason why—they trust you. And that's what you need to develop and foster: a relationship of trust, not friendship. Always be there for them.
- **Make them feel comfortable and ask questions about them. Sometimes we have to model this, again and again, to bring that comfort level into the classroom.** If they are not comfortable opening up, don't be frustrated. Be mindful that you are asking young men and women to open up to you, so it may take some time. When they do, they will do it genuinely, and you will be honored to be a witness to this!
- **Give personal feedback—try to avoid general feedback when you can.** Yes, it takes a little more time, but if you find a strength in their approach, their assignment, or something personal you can connect with, then they will receive affirmation that their ideas are carefully and thoughtfully considered. They are worth it!

Teachers, have fun, be authentic, and get ready to start an important year in the lives of the children you serve! Make relationships a priority, develop a classroom that welcomes questions, and one that promotes an area of growth and discovery. Soon, your classroom will be full of confident students who anticipate being in your class, one that thrives when it comes to solving problems, and truly demonstrates collaborative work!

Kevin Lay is a 9-12 STEM and science teacher at Gasconade Co. R-2. Kevin has been teaching for 17 years and was a 2019-2020 Missouri Teacher of the Year finalist. His loves are God, his wife, his children and the students he's honored to serve! In his downtime, he enjoys wrestling with his 8-year-old son, Carter and figuring out his 14-year-old daughter, Kendra. Kevin and his family recently started the next chapter of their lives in Florida.



Created by: Susan Stanton

Individualized Education Plan

- An Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is a plan for each eligible student to receive individualized instruction to meet their specific needs through the special education program
- Eligibility is determined based on the diagnosis of at least one of 13 disabilities including but not limited to: Specified Learning Disability, Speech/Language Impairment, Other Health Impairment, Autism, Intellectual Disability, Hearing Impairment, Traumatic Brain Injury, Emotionally Disturbed, etc. and the disability impacts their ability to be successful with general education curriculum
- Some students that had an IEP and no longer need one can switch to a 504 plan. This is because they have met their goals and can now be successful with the general education curriculum using other accommodations established in a 504
- Someone on the special education team, usually a teacher, is the case manager and holds annual meetings to update the IEP

What is In Common

- Both services are free and provided by the school to the student under FAPE. Schools receive additional funds for IEPs but not 504 Plans
- Both require Parental/guardian consent to receive services, initial placement, or perform evaluations. However, IEP requires written consent. 504 can have verbal consent, but written is preferred
- Re-evaluated every 3 years to determine continued eligibility
- Both provide accommodation when necessary such as extended time, read tests aloud, separate setting, or differentiated seating



About me:

My name is Susan Stanton. I am the department chair of the special education department of Owenville High School. I teach grades 9-12 Math and Science classes.

504 Plan

- Much broader & serves as a plan for support with removing handicaps that impact major life activity that may impede academic success at school and is not part of the special education program
- Some examples of eligibility include but not limited to: Diabetes, ADHD, Anxiety, PTSD, Orthopedic Impairment, Allergies (bees stings, food), Chronic Migraine Headaches, Mood Disorder, IBS (Irritable Bowel Syndrome), and students who have undergone chemo or radiation to address the issues that it can cause with learning
- Different districts can have different people oversee the 504 plan. A few examples are School counselors, school nurses, or 504 district process coordinators.

Check out the DESE website for more information about the differences between IEP and 504 Plans.
dese.mn.gov/dives/default.aspx?student-access.pdf

Tips for an Integrated Classroom

FROM A SECONDARY SPECIAL EDUCATION PERSPECTIVE

Created by Susan Stanton

HELPING YOU ACHIEVE INCLUSION

1. Know Your Students' IEP and/or 504 Plan

There are 3 main pieces of a student's IEP that are crucial to knowing. Students have key information located in their Present Level, Goal Pages, and Accommodation/modifications page.

The Present Level has information such as: behaviors, medical diagnoses, academic scores, likes and dislikes, learning styles, parental concerns, and so much more. Knowing if your student needs frequent snacks for blood sugar issues on top of their ADHD diagnosis or if he/she has a

seizure disorder along with their Autism diagnosis are all key things that will be found in their present level.

The Accommodation/modification page is the list of guidance teachers legally have to use to help the student be successful. Yes, legally. These are decided on each year during the annual IEP meeting as an aid to help the student be successful in the regular education classroom. It is based on parent, student, and teacher input, as well as academic achievement.

Goal Pages give the IEP purpose. The goals within the IEP measure student success in behavior, reading level, writing ability, math comprehension, speech/language service, and much more. Know your IEP students' goals! This way you can modify your curriculum to help them reach those goals.

About me:
My name is Susan Stanton. I am the department chair of the special education department of Owensville High School. I teach grades 9-12 Math and Science classes.

WHY SHOULD I ATTEND IEP MEETINGS?

1. Meet the parents and give them praises/ concerns about their child.
2. Hear the student's concerns in a more private setting
3. Hear updated information regarding your student's IEP
4. Be apart of determining the best way to help your student reach their goals in your classroom

"Teachers should always keep this thought in mind, Fair is not always equal. This is true with all students. What each student needs to be successful can look so different. Our students are not One Size Fits All."

-Cindy Buettmann, SPE
Special Education LEA Administrator
Gasconade County R-II School District (retired 2020)

HOW TO TEACH STUDENTS WHO HAVE AUTISM

By Jean K. Lawson

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a brain-based disorder. Students with autism think, learn, and process information differently from neurotypical students. While we cannot change the way students learn, we can change the way we provide instruction so they can learn in ways that are best for them.

Teaching students with autism begins with understanding the differences in learning. Students with autism have disturbances of speech, language, and nonverbal communication; and disturbances in relating appropriately to people, events, or objects. Some may also have disturbances of responses to sensory stimulation or disturbances of developmental rates and sequences.

What does all this mean for you as you prepare and present instruction?

Help from the Individualized Education Plan

Your first resource will be Form F: Accommodations and Modifications from the student's IEP. Your involvement on the team is vital for planning and providing an appropriate education for the student and creating an environment for student success.

There is often confusion about what constitutes an accommodation and what is a modification. Differentiated Instruction, which are adjustments in teaching methods or materials to accommodate each student's learning needs and preferences, are not included on Form F. Those are to be provided to all students, whether they have a disability or not.

- **Accommodations** are changes in procedures or materials that increase equitable access. They generate comparable results for students who need them and allow these students to demonstrate what they know and can do. For example, a student may listen to the audio version of a book while peers are reading the same book. Or a student might be given extra time to complete the same test that peers are taking or may be allowed to use a keyboard rather than writing his answers.
- **Modifications** are changes in procedures or materials that

change the construct of the educational task that make it difficult to compare results with typical peer results. These allow students to demonstrate what they know and can do in a non-standardized way. For example, a student may be given a shorter or easier assignment than peers. Or a student might have fewer spelling words or a different spelling list than peers.

Help from Knowing Your Students

The following information about students with autism can give you an awareness and specific tips for teaching students with autism. As you build a relationship with each student personally and collaborate with other staff who work with the student, your effectiveness as a teacher will increase. Students with autism are unique in the way they are impacted and in the support they need. As students grow and change, educators need to grow and change to meet their educational needs.

Disturbances of Speech, Language, and Nonverbal Communication

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

- **Expressive language:** Some students are nonverbal or may say random words but not with communicative intent. Others are verbal, but their syntax and grammar make it difficult for them to make themselves understood. Or if something isn't as they expected and they "get stuck," it can be difficult for them to express what they are having difficulty with, even when specifically asked what's wrong.
- **Receptive language:** Some students may have poor receptive language and not understand what they hear, even though it seems like they do. Many will use context cues to know what to do, e.g., watching what other students are doing or knowing what comes next in the schedule. Sometimes when students hear multi-step directions, they latch on to only the last one.
- **Processing information:** Some students may process



information more slowly, especially if it is novel. It may be misinterpreted as noncompliance or not understanding.

- **Conversations:** Some students may not initiate or respond to greetings, engage in a normal back-and-forth conversation, or stay on topic. Some students with autism who have become writers as adults provide insights about what it's like to be a child with autism. Several of these individuals have written that conversations happen so quickly it's difficult for them to jump in and be a part of the conversation.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- **Providing instruction:**
 - Reduce the amount of information presented; teach material in chunks.
 - Use graphic organizers; assist the students in filling one out or provide one completed, if needed.
 - Specifically identify the main idea.
 - Associate new information to previously learned information.
 - Provide examples; the more abstract the content, the more examples you need to give.
- **Giving directions**
 - Use fewer words. Be explicit and repeat what you say. If there are multiple steps, identify them, and tick them off with your fingers: e.g., First, put your supplies in your desk; second, push in your chair; third, get your jacket; fourth line up for recess. If the student gets stuck on or skips a step, you can repeat the instructions again with your fingers.
 - Use a gesture or a hand sign when giving a direction. You can look up some simple ones for common instructions and use them for all students, e.g., stand up; sit; stop; wait; go. Many online video learning songs include sign language, which are fun for all students to learn and use. Beckon with your finger when asking a student to come to you. Point when telling where to find something in the room or where to sit or stand.
 - Make auditory-visual connections by using posters for routines or quick-drawn pictures or diagrams on the board. If the student can read, the written word is a visual form that can help with understanding.
- **Encouraging conversation**
 - Use visuals for steps used often, e.g., cut, glue, color. Place these in order on the student's desk to show what to do.
 - If you repeatedly play certain games, write the rules on a poster board and review them before playing. Keep them handy for reference and for classmates to refer to if a problem develops.
 - If you find yourself repeating the same directions over and over, it's time to make a visual for it. Then you can show it when you give the directions so that all students understand.
- **Encouraging conversation**
 - Greet students and wait for a response; if there isn't one, instruct them to give one, e.g., "Say, 'good morning.'" Or if they can read, show them an index card with the words on it. Encourage peers to greet each other and teach them that sometimes they might not get a response and that's okay.
 - Keep students on track if they are getting off-topic by saying, "Right now we are talking about _____. Can you think of something to say about that?" Provide an idea if they can't think of one to get them focused.
 - After asking a question, wait time is important. Wait time allows for process time, think time, and response time. Be patient and teach other students to be patient, too. Try counting slowly to 10 in your head.

Disturbances in Relating Appropriately to People

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

- **Personal space and physical contact:** Students with autism may not acknowledge other children and appear to be in their own world. They may interact in unusual ways with peers to try to connect, e.g., getting very close to a person's face, frequently touching them in ways that hurt. Some students will avoid any kind of touch and may react with a verbalization or physically if they are touched or someone is too close.

- **Eye contact:** Students with autism may not look people in the eyes. Some turn to the side or turn their backs on the person talking to them. Writers with autism have described eye contact as painful or distracting and looking in someone's eyes prevents them from focusing on conversation or processing information.
- **Relationships:** A difficulty in forming friendships does not equal a dislike for friends. Many writers with autism have described their childhood as lonely because they did not know how to make friends. Additionally, they may not be able to share in imaginative play.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- **Teaching personal space and physical contact**
 - For students who get too close, you can put tape on a shared table or on the floor to designate an area to stay in. If you do this for the student with autism, plan to do it for more students rather than singling one person out. You can use it as a friendship lesson for appropriate physical contact.
 - Teach appropriate physical interactions, e.g., "You can give an air high-five or a thumbs up."
 - For students who react when someone touches them, teach them appropriate words or gestures to use to communicate, e.g., holding a hand up to indicate "stop," or saying things like, "You're in my space" or "Please move away." Teach others to respect these words and step away.
- **Getting eye contact:** There are different approaches for dealing with eye contact for students with autism. Some say to ignore it completely and others try to train eye contact. If it is extreme, without focusing too much on this issue, you can say things like,
 - "Turn your body toward the person who is talking to you."
 - "I know it may be hard to look me in the eye when we talk, but I need to know you're hearing and understanding me" and then develop a signal the student can use, like a thumbs up, to show understanding or agreement.
 - "Eyes up here" or "Look this way."
- **Developing relationships**
 - Model acceptance, patience, and love of each student. Notice and comment on strengths of each child so others will see that everyone can do something. Rotate helpers and leaders so each student can have a function in the classroom.
 - Explicitly teach your class how to be a friend.
 - Make statements to help students know they have friends, e.g., "You are sitting at the table with all your friends," or "You have lots of friends in this class"; and statements to affirm friends skills, e.g., "You are a good friend when you wait your turn" or "when you share your supplies."
 - Create activities where students share something they like about another student.
 - Use visual posters and social stories about social rules and expectations for the whole class.

- Ask your library for books that you can read to your class about differences. Teach your class to be accepting and kind to each other.
- Look for students who naturally want to help other students and pair them up in seating arrangements and group projects.

Restricted or Repetitive Patterns of Behavior, Interest, or Activities

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

- **Repetition:** Some students exhibit stereotyped or repetitive movements, use of objects or speech. Their use of objects may not be age-appropriate or in a functional way. They may line up toys or food; flip objects; spin wheels on a toy car; jump up and down; flap their hands, rock, repeat what others say or phrases from movies or commercials.
- **Special interests:** Some students have a strong attachment or preoccupation with specific topics like trains, dinosaurs, presidents, states, weather, etc.
- **Rigidity in routines:** Students with autism look for familiarity in the environment. They may insist on things always being the same and may have difficulty when the routine or schedule changes; changing from one activity or place to another in the classroom or from room to room; leaving work unfinished before moving on. They may also want their work to be perfect.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- **Dealing with repetition:** Recognize that some of the stereotyped behaviors have a function to help the student manage emotions and to bring order to a confusing world. Some of the behaviors can be ignored.
 - You can mention or ask the student about it, but you might not receive an answer: "I think when you jump you are excited." "Does your string help you to be calm?" "I see you've put all the raisins in a circle. I see other circles in the classroom, like the clock."
 - Disruptive behaviors may need redirection. For a student who jumps or flails in line, you might say, "Give yourself a big hug and hold yourself together while we stand in line." Also instruct other classmates to give themselves a big hug. Or "Hug yourself while we walk in the hall. You can jump and run when we get outside for recess."
 - Behaviors may indicate the need for more frequent breaks, which can be interspersed throughout the day. It might be as simple as getting a drink of water or looking out the window; it might be running an errand to the library or office or jumping on a trampoline.
- **Tapping into special interests:** Remember that memorizing interesting disconnected facts is not the same as understanding abstract relationships about a topic. Help students who can recite numerous facts to make connections about that information to

life. Use a student's special interests throughout the day for connection and motivation. For example,

- Make a black-and-white printout of the presidents' faces and a color version. Cut out the presidents from the color copy and give the student presidents throughout the day for completion of activities or tasks.
- Make trading cards of presidents or states and include the whole class in collecting cards.
- Let the student who loves weather be your daily weather reporter or have the class observe and graph daily weather.
- Print out worksheets that have dinosaurs or trains around the border.
- **Managing rigidity:** Establishing routines and structures is very important to create a healthy learning environment for all children.
 - Post a daily schedule. Use a symbol that represents a change to the schedule that can be placed on a time noting the change that day so students can be prepared for a change in routine.
 - Create a portable schedule for the student to carry with them. Use words, pictures, or both, depending on what is meaningful to the student.
 - Periodically, let the students know how much time is left before moving on to the next activity.
 - When a student "gets stuck" and can't move on, it might be that an expectation isn't being met, e.g., "I thought after this activity, we were going to recess," but you direct the group to the carpet. Ask the student if you can help him make the transition, acknowledge that "normally we go to recess now, but this time we'll go to the carpet first." Give the student extra time to think things through and join you when he is ready.

Disturbances of Responses to Sensory Stimulation

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

- Some students with autism may exhibit behaviors related to sensory integration disorders. Behavior may be hyperactive or unresponsive and can be auditory, visual, olfactory, gustatory, tactile, and kinesthetic responses.
- These unexpected behaviors can range from mild to intense, which can be verbal, physical, or both. You may know right away what caused the behavior. Or you might not have noticed anything that triggered it.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Be observant and think about what just happened before the behavior that might have been a trigger. Remain calm and quiet. If the student isn't able to communicate the problem to you, make a guess, e.g., "Is that loud noise bothering you?"
- For students who have consistent reactions, have a plan and teach the student to implement it, e.g., "Remember, if it's too loud, you can put on your headphones."

- Have alternatives for sensory reactions in activities you plan, e.g., gloves for students who don't want to put their hands in dirt when planting seeds; paintbrushes for spreading liquid glue.
- If you are doing cooking and smells or tastes are overwhelming, the student might just observe, or just stir the mixture.
- Prepare a Quiet Zone in your classroom where students can go when they are feeling overwhelmed so they can remain in class and then rejoin the group when they are ready.

Disturbances of Developmental Rates and Sequences

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

- Students with autism may have a noticeably different rate and order of learning from their peers. They may exhibit splinter skills, where some skills fall below their peers, some far above and some normal. They may regress in skills they had learned; they may learn at an exceptional rate and retain what they learn.
- Students with autism may not be able to learn at the pace of peers; understand deeper, more complex concepts; be independent in self-care, including hygiene, toileting, and eating.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Learn what you can about how the student with autism learns by reading the present level of functioning in their IEP. This section documents where they were the previous year and their level at the time the IEP was revised. From this information, you will see what progress was made in a year's time.
- Talk to other members of the IEP team about their patterns of learning and supports in place to meet their needs and help them to be successful.
- Remember you are not alone. A team exists for your students' education that includes special education teachers, therapists, family members and others. Collaborating with the team increases the probability of success for the student.

Students with autism in your classroom will stretch you to be a more effective teacher as you discover their uniqueness and target their strengths to provide the most appropriate education for them as individuals. They will increase your classroom capacity for acceptance and kindness for people with differences. Moreover, you have the opportunity to invest in students who will be better prepared for life in the community and the workplace.

Jean K. Lawson has an MA in special education and an autism certificate from Missouri State University. She has taught students with autism at Truman Elementary in Springfield since 2007. Her passion is providing authentic learning experiences for students so they can apply skills while learning them. Her goal is generalizing skills across settings, in the home and community, and eventually in the workplace.

SELF-CARE FOR TEACHERS

By Keri Cottrell

A parent is at your classroom door at 7:30 a.m. for an unscheduled parent/teacher conference. Your administrator stops you in the hall and would like to discuss your Performance Based Teacher Evaluation TODAY during your plan time. The internet is down, and your devices won't connect, and you can't make copies because the copy machine needs toner. And a student hasn't taken a needed medication and is acting out. As an educator, you are probably saying, "welcome to my world."

All of these things can quickly increase the stress level in your life. The American Medical Association reports that 60 percent of all illness and disease are caused by stress. This leads one to believe if we reduce the stress in our life, we will be healthier.

Being an educator causes you to constantly be trying to balance your home life and your professional life. If you do not engage in self-care, you will be forced to take care of yourself when stress presents itself as an illness, thus requiring you to seek medical care and take a step away from the classroom to allow your body time to heal. Taking care of yourself should be a top priority. But that is easier said than done.

Here are a few tips:

- Take time to eat a healthy diet to fuel your body and brain.
- Put exercise as a daily recurring event on your calendar.
- Make getting eight hours of sleep a priority. Sleep is your body's way of resetting.
- Turn off electronic devices at 9 p.m. to ensure you have time to decompress prior to going to sleep.
- Practice mindfulness by becoming familiar with your own breathing. Use taking a deep breath as an action you use to lower your heart rate during a stressful situation.
- Put together a playlist of your favorite songs.
- Read a self-care book. Some of my favorites are
 - "One Word," by Jon Gordon, Dan Britton, and Jimmy Page
 - "Boundaries," by Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend
- Utilize apps that focus on reducing stress.
 - Wisa allows you to have a conversation with a smart bot to focus on lowering your stress level.
- Develop the practice of keeping a Gratitude Journal.
 - List three things you are grateful for and why
 - List one to two goals for each day
 - Choose a person of the day Make it a point to have a positive interaction with this person.
- It's ok to not be ok. When stress overwhelms you, use your district's Employee Assistance Program to seek professional advice from a counselor or contact your primary care physician.

Buddha reminds us "Our life is shaped by our mind, for we become what we think". One thing of upmost importance.... take time to take care of you.

Keri Cottrell resides in Canton with her husband, Tony. They are the parents of two grown children, Andrew and Hannah. Keri received her bachelor's degree in elementary education from Culver-Stockton College and later went on to earn a master's degree in elementary administration from William Woods University. Keri spent 24 years as an elementary classroom teacher in the Canton R-5 School District. Currently, she serves as a member service coordinator for MSTA where she advocates for teachers in 37 school districts in northeast Missouri.

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING

What Is It and Why Is It Important

by Darbie Valenti Huff

What is Social-Emotional Learning?

According to the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (www.casel.org), Social-Emotional Learning, or SEL, is how children and adults learn to understand and manage emotions, set goals, show empathy for others, establish positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.

Social and Emotional Skills at a Glance

Self-Awareness	Self-Management	Social Awareness	Relationship Skills	Responsible Decision-Making
Identifying emotions	Emotional regulation	Perspective-taking	Communication	Identifying problems
Accurate self-perception	Impulse control	Attend to body language, tone, etc.	Social engagement	Analyzing situations
	Stress management		Cooperation	Solving problems
Recognizing strengths		Empathy		
	Self-discipline		Relationship-building	Evaluating
Self-confidence		Appreciating diversity		
	Self-motivation		Teamwork	Reflecting
Self-efficacy		Respect for others		
	Goal-setting			Ethical responsibility
Growth mindset				
Optimism	Organizational skills			Make good learning choices

Sample 6 Week Plan Integrating PBIS, SEL, Trauma Informed Practices and Restorative Justice

These weeks are meant to build on each other, so you continue to do the practices from the previous week and layer in new practices. Practices such as teaching expectations can be faded as students show proficiency, but any practice can be revisited or re-taught as needed.

Week 1	Week 2	Week 3
Focus Areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Getting to know names, strengths and needs. Schoolwide & Classroom Expectations Class Charters Community Circles Mindfulness/Calming Community Building Activities Recess Games Academic Goals 	Focus Areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Getting to know names, strengths and needs. Schoolwide & Classroom Expectations Peer and Class Problem Solving Classroom Community Activities Feel Good Plans Zones of Regulation Diagnostic Academic Work 	Focus Areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Getting to know names, strengths and needs. Schoolwide & Classroom Expectations Formal SEL Lessons Diagnostic Academic Work Bystanders Program Academic Routines & Transitions Interactive Structures
Week 4	Week 5	Week 6
Focus Areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build on Weeks 1-3 2 x 10 relationship building if needed Whole class project Circle Keepers Begin focused academic content Independent Reflections Empathy Building Character Trait/Dare of the Week 	Focus Areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build on weeks 1-4 Increase Self-Monitoring & Independence School Climate Survey Emotional Regulation Increase Academic Stamina Begin Class Rotations for Math & Specialties Character Trait/Dare of the Week 	Focus Areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build on weeks 1-5 Universal Screening Increase Self-Monitoring & Independence Increase Academic Stamina Schoolwide Expectations Video Challenge Fall Spirit Week Character Trait/Dare of the Week

MSTA Professional Developer, Darbie Valenti Huff, has 19 years of teaching experience spanning elementary level to college level as an adjunct professor for Northwest Missouri State University. Darbie has received numerous teaching honors, including being named 2017 Missouri Teacher of the Year, which have afforded her the opportunity to serve as an ambassador for STEM education as well as trauma-informed education in Missouri, nationally, and around the globe as she fulfills her passion for building capacity in teachers.

Why is Social-Emotional Learning Important?

Social-Emotional Learning is not an additional program that is taught in addition to the curriculum but rather it is the foundation on which a classroom operates successfully. By focusing on the social-emotional needs of our students we can not only help them to develop into successful human beings but we can create safe learning environments in which all students can thrive.

Strategies to Support Social-Emotional Learning

- Frequent and consistent check-ins that allow students to recognize their emotions, therefore increasing their self-awareness. This can be done using Googleforms or platforms such as www.closegap.org.
- Practice greeting students daily
- Be sure to share about yourself so that students can connect with you which helps develop trust and strong relationships
- Providing stress management tips and strategies
- Practice mindfulness in the classroom (Visit www.transformingeducation.org to access a mindfulness kit)
- Use GoNoodle or a similar platform to help kids to self-regulate
- Implementing lessons that develop a culture of empathy
- Focusing on creating a classroom community that is built upon strong relationships.
- Continue to focus on community building all through out the year and not limit it to the beginning of the school year
- Use and reflect on this SEL Self-Assessment created by CASEL: (<https://schoolguide.casel.org/resource/sel-in-the-classroom-self-assessment/>)
- Implement cooperative learning into instruction which helps support relationship skills
- Collectively create a classroom social contract
- Develop a plan to incorporate SEL into daily routines and academics such as this one:



WORKING WITH PARAPROFESSIONALS IN THE CLASSROOM

By Dr. Tanya Vest

At some point in your teaching career, you will have students who require supplemental services or adaptations for their safety, health, and academic success. Often that additional help in the classroom comes in the capacity of a teaching assistant or a paraprofessional. Yet many teachers and paraprofessionals are unclear of each other's role and how to work well together for the benefit of students. As a result, tensions can develop between teachers and paraprofessionals.

Here are some tips to make this relationship successful for everyone involved, especially the student.

- Mutual respect: The working relationship must be built on mutual respect. Paraprofessionals are hired to provide support for students and ensure their success in the classroom. They are working with you, not for you.
- Be a role model: Model what appropriate behavior looks like when working with students and other adults in the building.
- Communication: You are the teacher, ensure that the para knows the daily schedule (i.e., where does the para need to be and when does the work need to be done) and the expectations for working with students. Examples would be:
 - Who is the para responsible for?
 - What are the expectations (confidentiality, dress, meeting attendance, what are the supervisory duties...)?
- Chain of command: Ensure the para knows the hierarchy of authority in your school. While the building principal is the highest level of authority, as the teacher you are the supervisor for the paraprofessional and will provide the daily schedule and responsibilities that go along with that schedule.
- Hourly employees: Paraprofessionals are hourly employees and fall under the guidelines of such; whereas teachers are salaried. This differentiation has legal ramifications. Hourly employees should receive an uninterrupted lunch, as well as a morning and afternoon break.
- Provide necessary "need to know" information: Paraprofessionals should be provided with IEP or 504 information regarding ALL students they work with. This is a vital part of the process to ensure success for students and the paraprofessional.
- Provide "tips" for managing student behavior: Provide the paraprofessional with some "tips" on managing student behavior. Remember, this might be the first time they have worked with children.

Dr. Tanya Vest retired after 29 years in education as a teacher, assistant principal, assistant superintendent and a superintendent. Currently, Dr. Vest works for Penmac Education Staffing creating and providing professional learning for substitute teachers. In addition, she also provides training for Math & Movement which uses multi-sensory learning approaches to teach students valuable skills to succeed in their school's math & reading curricula.

STEM: IT'S MORE THAN AN ACRONYM

tips on implementing STEM in your classroom



By Kevin Lay

STEM (Science Technology Engineering and Math) has played a key role not only in the workforce in our state and nation but it has played a key role in the education of our students in every grade. Whether you call it STEM, STEAM, STREAM, or HAMSTER, it's more than just an acronym. It is a culture that harbors a growth mindset and empowers students in every subject area. What can it look like when you integrate STEM into YOUR classroom? Well, that's the exciting part! For each classroom, the vision is different, and the path is unique. Plus, there could be a good chance that you may already be applying STEM principles in your class. Take a look at a few of these points and see if you can modify them to meet you where you are with students in your classroom.

STEM does not have to be its own subject

Thinking of STEM as another subject to teach can be a daunting task as teachers are already busy spending countless hours prepping for many subjects in class. Instead, think of STEM as a resource of problem-solving techniques that can be integrated into just about any class, at almost any time and reach a myriad of learners.

Integrate problem-based learning in your subject area.

In many classrooms, assignments or projects typically have a standard rubric with little room for modification by the teacher or adaptation by the students. This convergent thinking often leads to the same end-goal. STEM centers on problem-based learning which promotes divergent thinking, encouraging a student or team

to take a problem, and reveals many ideas for a solution. A crisis that a character in a book is facing can be shared with the class to find alternate ideas for a solution. Art and theater are constantly revealing problems to students that need to be solved.

Perhaps a pandemic has some effect on our government and social and economic structures. What can one do if given the opportunity to solve this problem in the event it arises again? Maybe a rule that is always “exploited” in an activity in Physical Education can be revisited, modified, and tested by students that have knowledge of playing the game. Take whatever the problem is, and share it with the class. Allow your students to solve the problem and give you their authentic and well thought out solutions. They can and will surprise you with ideas that you could have never imagined being a solution.

Use technology to share their ideas and empower your classroom

Communicative technology is readily available to us educators to help students sell their ideas. Sure, there is PowerPoint and Google Slides. Those are okay and effective means. But, if you really want to encourage collaboration and a level of understanding deeper than a typical DOK level, have them create a video. Technology has an amazing ability to empower your students and give them a voice and impact that transcends the walls of your classroom by using videos, podcasts, blogs or finding other creative online solutions. Watch them build a script with information and prepare as to what they are going to say. You may see them do more research, work far more collaboratively, and create something even more beautiful than what you had ever anticipated! Students have phones already compatible with video editing and movie making software. Try using Flipgrid, which is an incredible resource that not only gives students a voice but also serves as an incredibly powerful tool for the feedback! The advancement of STEM

depends on the reliable and constructive feedback of others that share passionate interests. Give your students the opportunity to share authentic feedback with others!

Think about how to inject a level of entrepreneurship into your content

As teachers, we are going to sell what we have because we believe in it. When your students are completing a task, or solving a problem or presenting their solution, are they really trying to sell it, or give you the bare minimum? There is a large part of STEM education that gets overlooked, and that’s the idea of empowering our students to communicate their ideas effectively! The ideas, thoughts, research, and technology that STEM brings to our world should be effectively communicated to the people. How will you help prepare your students to be effective communicators and “sell” their product, their project, their ideas, and most importantly, their solutions?

Connect with the amazing teachers in your building

There are already teachers that are doing some incredibly special things in their classrooms, and you can be a part of that. Truth be told, you’re probably doing something that they would love to be a part of too! ELA teachers can contribute so much to writing and note-taking and inspire this connection with recording data in any class. Don’t think for one minute that poems, writing patterns, and styles don’t relate to algorithms or coding. They correspond more than you may know! Theater and art contribute at such high levels to every subject that is taught to students. Digital art design, drawing, acting all develop levels of communication (verbal and non-verbal) that build confidence in our students. Find teachers doing amazing problem-based-learning in their classrooms and make it a cross-curricular lesson for both of you. If you don’t share all the same students, then

take that time to allow other students to share what they are trying to accomplish with their peers. History can combine with science and physical education, art can combine with computer science, ELA can combine with engineering, and math combines well with just about all of it. Do you get the point? There’s not an avenue that can’t be explored if you just are willing to put a little more time into it, and really collaborate on behalf of your students!

Give them opportunities to overcome

STEM careers and opportunities are full of great and life-changing moments, inventions, and pieces of technology. Those paths are also lined with many errors, mistakes, and blunders. If we are truly empowering students, are we giving them opportunities to grow from their mistakes? If not, then what are we really doing? If a student never makes a mistake, they don’t learn the extremely important values of determination and empowerment. This is not the same as letting a student take a test over and over again. What is being suggested here is that you give your students a sincere chance to follow a path they created to a solution. This path leads to many different outcomes. Some produce great results, and others have results they were not expecting. Give them a chance to overcome those moments, and shine a light on them as opportunities, not failures. When they reach a conclusion that is not



ideal or accurate, it gives them the chance to learn, and to teach others. That's where the empowerment begins.

Know that practical art is more than just aesthetics

STEM is embraced by the arts! Look around to see the technology and science that is integrated into digital design classrooms and on the new tablets! If you are in the theater, talk to your STEM teachers and ask them to help you with a great idea for the fall or spring performance. Can they make a rose that has petals that drop on queue and add a fan to it so they drop slowly for that Beauty and the Beast performance? If you are in an art class, can you connect with the history classes to discuss the designs of a certain period's architecture and the availability of their resources and knowledge at that time? Have the earth or material science teacher connected with these subjects talk about the material mined at the time and used to build. Challenge your students with a problem and see their solutions, given the parameters of a certain period. These are just a few examples of just some of the ideas that can be explored to implement STEM into your lessons and really empower your students!

Special education teachers are great resources for STEM thoughts and ideas

Not only do special education teachers have their own subjects and classes

they lead, special education teachers are constantly modifying lesson plans from other teachers in every subject. They take topics, lessons or projects and creative ways to incorporate other subjects and bring authentic relevancy to help their students understand the importance and application of just what they are trying to solve! Special education teachers are creating problem-based learning opportunities for each of their students to encourage them to solve problems and to overcome obstacles they may face during their time of discovery. This wonderful community of teachers has been incorporating STEM principles for many years already!

STEM is already being done by Career Technical Education and ag students

Problem-based learning is at the root of a lot of CTE programs and agriculture programs that many of our schools have. Whether your school or district houses its own CTE program, or students travel to one, find one, and see what's going on with these wonderful educators. See how they apply STEM in a real-life application and are preparing our students for careers and technical schools. Welding, farming, metal shops, floriculture, woodworking, and so many more subjects, already integrate science, technology, engineering, the arts, and math into their lessons. It's a great resource for any core subject or

practical art subject to connect with and observe. Network with your nearest CTE or ag educator and collaborate on a project or a problem they are working with their students on.

Teachers, you have so many resources available to you at your fingertips. Remember that STEM is more than an acronym. It's an impression, an environment that you can create in YOUR classroom. Communicate with your mentor, your peers, and your principal. Let them know what some of your wonderful ideas are and share those ideas with your students. Model to your students the rewarding and challenging need to take risks and to learn, because that is crucial to growing character in students no matter what field they go into! Have fun and find the joy in discovery because soon, you will see a team of problem-solvers that are not only passionate about so many subjects, but feel more confident about themselves to make an impact in a world of opportunity.

Kevin Lay is a 9-12 STEM and science teacher at Gasconade Co. R-2. Kevin has been teaching for 17 years and was a 2019-2020 Missouri Teacher of the Year finalist. His loves are God, his wife, his children and the students he's honored to serve! In his downtime, he enjoys wrestling with his 8-year-old son, Carter and figuring out his 14-year-old daughter, Kendra. Kevin and his family recently started the next chapter of their lives in Florida.





GRANT WRITING

Do you have a great idea, but lack the materials, equipment or resources to make it happen? Grants are a great way to make your dreams come true. The trick is writing a winning application.

Here are six tips for successful grant applications:

1. Read the full application. Make a list of everything you'll need to complete it — budget information, administrator approval, etc.
2. Make sure your idea is fully developed. Define the project and its purpose.
3. Answer the following questions:
 - Is there a need for this program?
 - Why should it be supported?
 - Who will benefit? What are the expected outcomes?
 - Are the objectives measurable?
 - How will they be evaluated?
 - Is the project replicable?
 - How will information gleaned from the project be shared?
4. Put a fresh spin on an existing idea.
5. Show innovation, creativity and educational soundness.
6. Write persuasively, logically and with clarity.

Budget matters

Most grant applications will ask for a budget of your project. Here's what you need to do:

- Provide an outline of anticipated expenses.
- Show costs with respect to grant limits.
- Remember that detailed budgets accompany well-planned projects.

Cross your Ts

- Proofread your application before submitting. Spelling and grammar count!
- Acquire appropriate signatures.
- Proofread your application again. Reading it aloud can be a good way to catch mistakes.
- Postmark your submission by the deadline.

Are you unsure of where to look for grants?

- Check with your local service organizations, organizations related to your content area, corporate foundations, U.S. Department of Education, Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, etc.



DÉCOR TIPS ON A SHOESTRING

Your classroom is your home five days a week. Make it a place where you'll feel comfortable working and your students will feel comfortable learning.

Keep it age- and subject-appropriate

A kindergarten or first-grade classroom should feel warm and inviting. This is your students' early impression of school. They're going to be just as nervous as you on that first day. Make it a place they'll want to walk into.

A high school classroom should be more businesslike, but that doesn't mean drab. Posters are a good way to decorate inexpensively for nearly any subject — literary quotes for an English classroom, maps for history and geography, the periodic table of the elements for a chemistry lab. If posters get expensive, make your own with quotes from literary or historic figures, scientific diagrams, etc.

Keep it organized

Develop a storage system that will work for your classroom. Put the supplies you need at the beginning of the year in the place that is easiest to access. Rotate your stored items so the end-of-year supplies move gradually forward.

Plastic containers can be easily labeled and stacked, and are more durable than cardboard boxes.

Let your students be the stars

Displaying student work or awards can keep your décor fresh, show off your students' successes and help your students feel more at home in your classroom.

Keep a record

When you complete a display or other classroom décor project, take a photo so you'll remember it next time.

Decorating on a budget

- Scout yard sales or thrift stores for items such as furniture or bookends.
- Visit www.freecycle.org to find a group in your area. Freecycleers can post unneeded items they want to find homes for, or request items they are hoping to find. This could be a good place to find secondhand furniture, storage boxes, unused art supplies or even a tank for your classroom goldfish.
- Look for sales or collect coupons for discount stores, craft stores, bookstores, etc. If you try to buy throughout the year, it will mean a less dramatic dent on your wallet.
- Talk to the retirees in your district. Are they going to throw away those old bulletin-board materials? Don't think of it as scavenging, think of it as recycling.
- Look around your house or your friends' houses. Does someone have yarn leftover from a knitting hobby that got derailed? It can be used in numerous creative ways. Posters from a theatrical production? Let them dot the walls of your drama or English classroom.



RETIREMENT

Two organizations provide retirement benefits for most of Missouri's public school employees. The Public School Retirement System, or PSRS, represents teachers, counselors and other certificated employees. The Public Education Employee Retirement System, PEERS, represents custodians, secretaries, bus drivers and others who are not certificated. Teachers in the St. Louis City and Kansas City 33 school districts have their own system.

Who's in charge of PSRS/PEERS?

PSRS/PEERS is run by a Board of Trustees. Four of the trustees are elected by members of the system and serve four-year terms. The other three are appointed by the governor.

How does it work?

The PSRS/PEERS Board of Trustees votes on contribution rates every year. Rates may change based on actuarial reports. PSRS members and their employers each contribute 14.5 percent. PEERS members and their employers contribute 6.86 percent. Members receive a statement every fall showing their account balance.

Do I also get Social Security?

Most PSRS/PEERS members do not have Social Security taxes withheld from their earnings, therefore they do not receive Social Security benefits. As of July 2010, certain employees must pay two-thirds of their retirement contributions into PSRS and the remaining portion into Social Security. Check with your district to see where you fall.



Not that I don't love teaching, but when can I retire?

There are three ways to get eligibility:

- At age 60 with at least five years of service.
- After 30 years of service, regardless of age.
- When you meet the Rule of 80, which means the sum of your age, plus years of service equals at least 80.

Members can also seek early retirement if they are at least age 55, with at least five years of service, or have at least 25 years of service. Benefits for early retirement are calculated with an age-reduced formula.

I have a question that's not answered here.

PSRS/PEERS offers Pre-Retirement Planning Seminars for members who are within five years of retirement. These are held throughout the state and at PSRS headquarters in Jefferson City. PSRS also offers individual retirement counseling in-person and online. For more information, or to register, call PSRS at 800-392-6848.

For your own reference, the PSRS/PEERS website has extensive information about eligibility, calculating benefits, payment options and more. Learn more at www.psr-peers.org/psrs



Once you retire you can stay involved with MSTAs by joining the Retired Missouri State Teachers Association. msta.org/rmsta



WE CAN HELP YOU SUCCEED

Here are a few reasons to join Missouri's most successful education organization.

Liability insurance

As part of regular membership, you are covered with \$2 million worth of professional liability insurance. It protects you if you are sued as a result of activities conducted in your professional capacity. And it provides coverage for both damages and payment of legal fees arising from most civil and some criminal lawsuits.

As part of your dues, your protection is enhanced with a \$10,000 accidental death and dismemberment policy that covers you for accidents that occur anytime, anywhere.

Legal services

MSTA's Legal Services Department and statewide network of attorneys provide you with accurate, confidential answers to your legal questions. We back our members in hearings with school boards, in meetings with administrators and in court. Call 866-343-6186.

Legislative advocacy

MSTA is among the most effective lobbies in Jefferson City. Our lobbyists are in the Capitol every day the legislature is in session. They are working for increased funding for education and better pay and benefits for educators.

Salary and negotiation services

MSTA's skilled salary consultants are experts in school finance, with extensive experience in working with budgets, the foundation formula and school boards. We can provide your CTA with the tools and support to organize and negotiate better salaries and benefits — including bargaining information.

Discounts and deals

Your membership includes travel discounts, low-interest credit cards, and more. Visit msta.org/discounts



Professional Learning

We help you keep up with the latest trends in a rapidly changing profession. Our Beginning Teacher Assistance Programs take place at locations throughout the state and online offering you optimal convenience. The annual state convention is an array of workshops, speakers and exhibits, and is free. Workshops are available for individual districts throughout the year as well as online professional development offered asynchronously through our learning management system to meet individualized professional development needs. We also offer Beyond the Book Club, 30-minute webinars, and publications available digitally to further enhance Missouri educators' Professional Learning needs.

Information

MSTA's website, *msta.org*, is updated regularly with news stories, podcasts, blogs and the latest educational resources. You can also take workshops and register for events online.

MSTA Update is an email-newsletter that members automatically receive bi-weekly. It includes updates and information from MSTa, education news, announcements and professional development reminders.

Social networking

MSTA is also active in social networking. We maintain pages on Facebook, and offer up-to-the-minute info on our Twitter feed. Find us on Facebook at facebook.com/missouriteachers. To follow us on Twitter, visit twitter.com/msta.

Affordable dues

Membership in MSTa costs only \$219 per year for full-time professional educator members.

First-time members and professional educator members employed half time or less pay \$124.

Our dues do not automatically increase annually; MSTa's Assembly of Delegates must approve any dues increases.

Associate member dues are \$90; retired members, \$25, or \$250 for a life membership; student members, \$0.

For information about any of these services, call MSTa's toll-free number at 800-392-0532, or visit *msta.org*.



I NEED...

(a guide to websites and
phone numbers for teachers)

Help with a problem at school.

Call your MSTA Member Service Coordinator at 800-392-0532.

Help with a legal contract question.

Call MSTA's legal services toll free at 866-343-6186.

To know the status of my certification.

Visit the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education certification website at dese.mo.gov/educator-quality/certification or call the DESE certification office at 573-751-0051.

To attend a Beginning Teacher Assistance Program.

Visit msta.org/events for information about our BTAP both online and in-person, or call our professional learning department at 800-392-0532.

Information about my retirement plan or contributions.

Visit the website for the Public School Retirement System (PSRS/PEERS) at psrs-peers.org, or call 800-392-6848.

To report an act of violence, bullying or a threat:

Call the Department of Social Services hotline at 866-748-7047, or visit schoolviolencehotline.com.



MISSOURI STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Advocating for and empowering public educators so they can teach

MSTA's professional learning opportunities prepare today's educators for tomorrow's learning.



Beginning Teacher Assistance Program (BTAP)

- DESE approved 2-year training for state-required certification
- Facilitated by former educators who know what teachers need
- Education law covered by school law attorneys
- On-site, in-district and virtual opportunities

Statewide Networking and Learning Opportunities

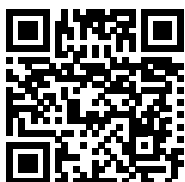
- Leadership Conference
- MSTA Convention
- New Professional Training Camp
- Understanding Challenging Behaviors and Trauma Retreat
- Virtual New Teacher Summit

MSTA Workshops and Presentations

- Relevant, high-quality professional learning to support all needs
- MSTA workshops align to Learning Forward Standards and Missouri Teacher Standards
- Dynamic in-house presenters are subject matter experts
- Early-out, half-day or full-day workshops

Personalized Learning Opportunities

- Online teacher book clubs
- Online courses for asynchronous learning
- 30-Minute Webinar Series
- Weekly TikTok Teacher Tips
- MSTA Presents podcast
- Quarterly printable PD2Go
- Mini-courses
- Virtual teacher meet up



Please visit www.msta.org/professional-learning for more information.

800-392-0532 • msta.org



Providing **relevant,**
engaging and **high-quality**
professional learning
for educators.

MISSOURI STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

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