

VIRGINIA
JOURNAL of

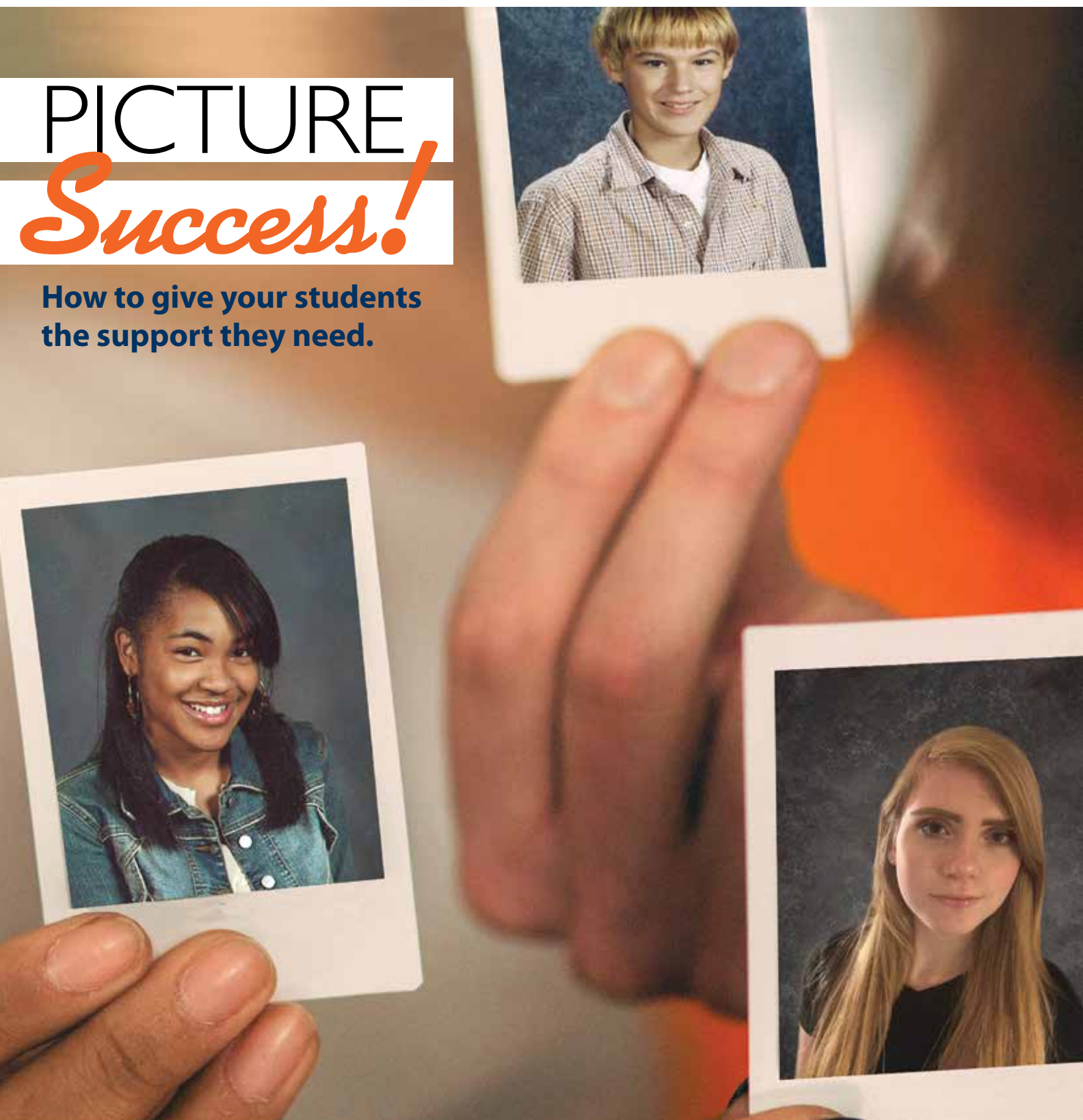
EDUCATION N

The magazine of the Virginia Education Association

DECEMBER 2018

PICTURE *Success!*

**How to give your students
the support they need.**





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COVER STORY

Keeping them afloat.

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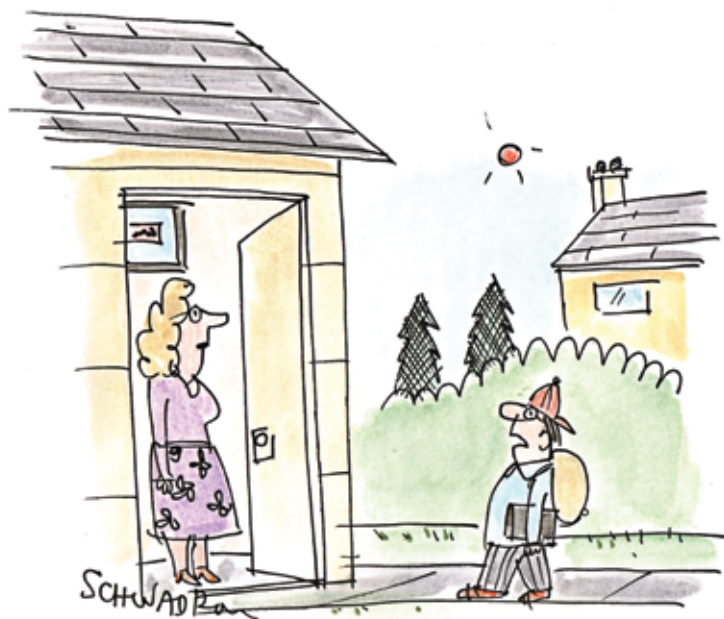
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Cover photo by iStock. Photo-illustration by Lisa Sale.



**"I'm home early. Because of budget cuts,
they're laying off students."**



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VEA Vision:

A great public school for every child in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

VEA Mission:

The mission of the Virginia Education Association is to unite our members and local communities across the Commonwealth in fulfilling the promise of a high quality public education that successfully prepares every single student to realize his or her full potential. We believe this can be accomplished by advocating for students, education professionals, and support professionals.



"We have an excellent substitute teacher program."

Kids Don't Deserve Old School Buildings

Waynesboro High School is a Frankenstein monster of a building.

The original building was constructed in 1937. Since then, there have been additions in the '50s, '70s, and '90s.

In that same time, points out school superintendent Jeffrey Cassell, the community has gone through four completely different hospitals.

Does it really matter how old the school is? Cassell responds this way: Would you rather have your heart surgery in the five-year-old, \$32 million cardiovascular center at Augusta Health, or in the building that housed the 1930s hospital? ●

— from an editorial in the *Roanoke Times*.



Take a Load Off!

Those heavy backpacks our students are lugging with them can take a toll on their spines, according to a recent study published in *Surgical Technology International*. A loaded-down bookbag can exert a force of

7 to more than 11 times its actual weight,

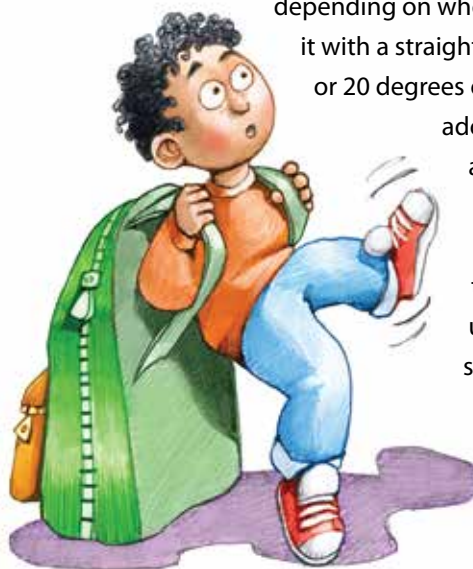
depending on whether the student is carrying it with a straight (neutral-positioned) spine

or 20 degrees of forward flexion (a typical

adolescent bend when carrying a backpack).

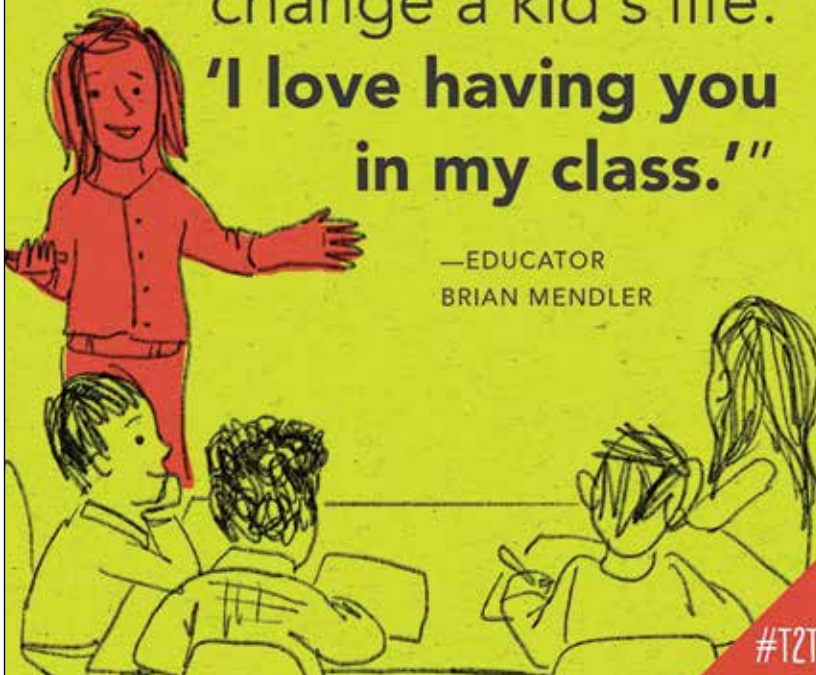
That kind of force is consistent with other studies that have linked backpack use to back and neck pain, spinal disc compression, and changes in posture and walking mechanics.

Our kids need to lighten up. ●



"Seven words that can change a kid's life: 'I love having you in my class.'"

—EDUCATOR
BRIAN MENDLER



#T2T

If They Get These Questions Right...

When students misbehave in class, help them steer themselves in a positive direction by asking a series of questions, suggests National Board Certified Teacher and principal **Rita Platt (@ritaplatt)**. Try either of the two question sets below.

SET 1

*What are you doing? What **should** you be doing? Will you please do that right now?*

SET 2

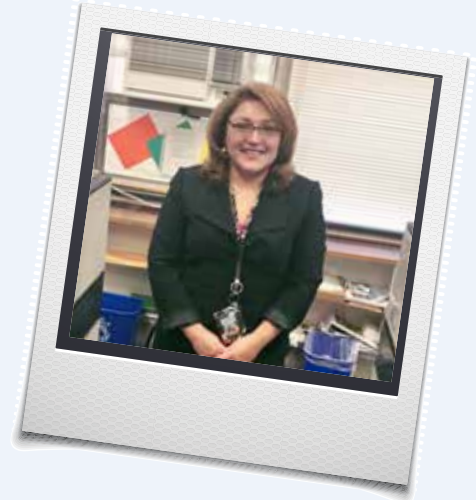
Why do you think that is okay? Where did you learn to behave like that? Who in your life believes acting like that is okay? Can you stop behaving like that now, please?

SOURCE: *Middleweb.com*

Establishing lasting peace is the work of education; all politics can do is keep us out of war.

Maria Montessori

quotefancy



TOUCHING BASE WITH...

CAROLINA CADENA

Fairfax Education Association
Early childhood and family services curriculum
and grant management assistant

What's something you like about your job?

My career has challenged me in ways I never expected, touched my heart profoundly, and allowed me to build deep connections with so many people, both colleagues and families, that I wouldn't otherwise have had the honor of knowing. I see tremendous resilience and healing in our families, and I love that each of my team members works toward the same goal.

How has being an Association member helped you?

I like that the VEA is a collection of professionals who have the common objective of promoting and improving education. Being a member makes me feel bonded with others as we advocate and share challenges and triumphs. ●

Illustrations by iStock



"Before you do my grades, consider all the things I bring to this classroom that can't be measured."

The 'High Five'?

When the polling organization Gallup asked K-12 school superintendents to name their five biggest challenges, this is what came back:

1. Preparing students for engaged citizenship
2. Improving achievement
3. Educator retention
4. Evaluating school effectiveness
5. College and workforce readiness ●



"Today, I'm going to show you what my mom thinks is chicken pox."

When the Wheels Don't Turn...

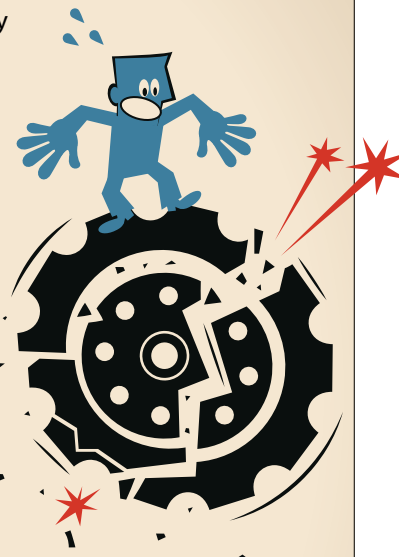
In 2016, the Virginia Board of Education made formal recommendations on some very important ways the state's Standards of Quality should be updated in order to provide a top-notch system of public education to our young people.

All the Board can do is make the recommendations—it's up to the General Assembly to put them into effect by funding them.

As of today, legislators have enacted...none of them.

Here are some of the recommendations made and so far unfunded:

- Eliminate legislation that artificially caps the number of public school support positions funded by the state.
- Require one school counselor for every 250 K-12 students.
- Require one full-time assistant principal for every 400 K-12 students.
- Require one full-time social worker and one full-time school psychologist for every 1,000 students.
- Require one full-time principal in every elementary school.
- Require one full-time school nurse for every 550 students. ●



TAKING FEAR OUT OF THE EQUATION "TEACHERS SHOULD NOT HAVE TO FEAR SPEAKING UP ON BEHALF OF STUDENTS WHOSE EDUCATION IS BEING NEGLECTED, SPEAKING UP ABOUT INTIMIDATION OF LATINO STUDENTS, ABOUT LEAD IN OUR WATER. STAFF SHOULD NOT HAVE TO FEAR FOR THEIR JOB WHEN FILING A BULLYING REPORT AGAINST AN ADMINISTRATOR, OR HAVING TO SLEUTH OUT WHO SOMEONE'S FRIENDS ARE BEFORE DECIDING WHETHER OR NOT IT IS SAFE TO SPEAK OUT."

— Emma Clark of the Chesterfield Education Association, an English teacher at Falling Creek Middle School



THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY MUST PICK IT UP “FUNDING FOR EDUCATION IN VIRGINIA, INCLUDING SCHOOL FACILITIES AND EDUCATION MORE BROADLY, IS THE SHARED RESPONSIBILITY OF THE STATE AND ITS LOCALITIES. BUT THE STATE GOVERNMENT DOESN’T FUND ITS SHARE — A FACT UNDISPUTED BY BOTH STATE AND LOCAL EDUCATION OFFICIALS. THAT FORCES THE LOCALITIES TO MAKE UP THE DIFFERENCE, BECAUSE IF THEY DON’T, THEIR FACILITIES WILL BECOME OUTDATED, THEIR STUDENTS WILL FAIL THE STATE’S SOLs AND THEY WILL NOT MEET THE STATE’S OTHER ACCREDITATION REQUIREMENTS, INCLUDING GRADUATION PERCENTAGES.

SOME VIRGINIA LOCALITIES CAN PROVIDE THE NEEDED FUNDING TO OVERCOME THE STATE’S FAILURE. MANY CANNOT; THEY SIMPLY DON’T HAVE THE RESOURCES.”

— Tom Joyce, writing in the *Roanoke Times*

EPIC FAILS=EPIC BEGINNINGS? “FAILURE HAS TO BE AN OPTION. NO IMPORTANT ENDEAVOR THAT REQUIRED INNOVATION WAS DONE WITHOUT RISK.”



— James Cameron, filmmaker

Teaching Our Kids to be Civil

Seven ways you can help young people learn to engage in civil discourse, from TheConversation.com:



1. Avoid personal attacks. *Issues, not individuals.*
2. Try easy topics first. *Practice debate and discussion skills on a less controversial topic.*
3. Introduce familiar as well as new topics. *Bring in topics students are passionate about.*
4. Keep discussions structured. *Have clear rules.*
5. Have students prepare. *If they're ready, more will participate.*
6. Take politics head on. *Elections provide lots of topics to analyze.*
7. Examine social movements. *Why do people organize?●*

Illustration by iStock


An orange life preserver with white stripes is floating in blue water. The life preserver is the central focus, with its rope handles visible. The water has a textured, rippling surface. The title text is overlaid on the center of the life preserver.

COVER STORY

KEEPING THEM *Afloat*

How you support your students can make all the difference.

By Audrey Wittrup and Daniel Willingham



What do we think about most when look back on the teachers who had the most impact

on us? Gallup may have an answer. When asked to describe the teacher who had the greatest impact on their lives, most American adults don't choose words like "knowledgeable" or "demanding." Rather, the most popular response was "caring." Social support is undeniably one of the most important resources that we, as educators, have to offer our students. And such support offers more than just fond memories: Research has shown that caring and supportive relationships help students successfully tackle the challenges they face.

"No significant learning occurs without a significant relationship," is the succinct way Dr. James Comer of the Yale Child Development Center, puts it.

Social support comes in a variety of forms and can range from overtly supportive expressions to more practical day-to-day support.

It can happen for both students and entire classrooms, and it has been associated with a range of positive outcomes for students of all ages. At the individual level, teachers can make efforts to get to know their students personally and to acknowledge their academic contributions. At the classroom level, teachers can plan activities that foster a sense of community and communicate the real-world value of lessons and activities.

Social support is the sense of being helped, esteemed, and valued by others, a pivotal factor in confidence-building for young people. Psychologists typically refer to four types of supportive behaviors: *emotional support* (expressing caring and concern), *appraisal support* (providing evaluative feedback such as praise and encouragement), *instrumental support* (providing tangible aid such as financial help), and *informational support* (providing factual assistance such as advice or instruction on how to complete a task). >>>

So, how can teachers develop the kind of student relationships that are characterized by trust, encouragement, and reassurance? We'll attempt to answer that by looking at each of the four types of social support. Each is prompted by different actions on the part of the teacher and can have different benefits for the student.

EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

Emotional support from teachers, researchers say, can promote students' self-esteem and can also help combat negative outcomes such as depression and other mental health struggles. Perhaps the best

their lives. This also demonstrates your care and thoughtfulness, and students who feel a personal connection to their teacher are more likely to be actively engaged in what you're trying to help them learn.

Bearing in mind the differing perspectives of adults and young people can also be very important. For instance, teachers often look for cooperation and compliance as signs of respect—in other words, a student shows respect by doing what is expected. Adolescents, in contrast, view recognition as an indication of respect. You can show your respect for your students by acknowledging their individuality and taking their

school hours or loaning materials to them when they need something. It's a concrete way you show your students you're willing to go out of your way to be helpful.

Informational support refers to guidance or information that can be used to solve a problem, and it can be anything from sharing information about opportunities (e.g., internships, part-time jobs, scholarships) to regularly exposing students to a rigorous and engaging curriculum. This kind of support can be especially valuable for your students who come from disadvantaged backgrounds and who may miss out on valuable opportunities

“WHEN A SUPPORTIVE CONNECTION CAN BE MADE, IT'S POWERFUL AND CAN BE ESPECIALLY SIGNIFICANT FOR STUDENTS WHO OTHERWISE EXPERIENCE THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT AS ALIENATING.”

and most direct way we can offer emotional support is by making a concerted effort to get to know each student in our classrooms. It's not as easy as it sounds, but it can start by doing something as simple as quickly reaching the point of readily knowing each student's name (and pronouncing it correctly). Learning your students' interests and remembering details they share about themselves is a logical further step and will also help students feel known and respected.

In addition, knowing a little about what makes your students tick can also help make it easier for you to design your curriculum in ways that make it more relevant to

classroom contributions seriously.

INSTRUMENTAL AND INFORMATIONAL SUPPORT

Instrumental and informational support are also important ways you can build your students' motivation and engagement. Research has shown these forms of social support are associated with a range of positive outcomes, including boosts in reading and math achievement, student engagement, and positive academic attitudes.

Instrumental support is the way you choose to physically provide things for your students, such as making it possible for them to use your classroom space outside of normal

because they don't have the social network other students may have access to. For many such students, you can be an important source of social capital; for example, you may be the only adult in their lives with a college-going history, making you a key source of information about realistic aspirations, the application process, obstacles that will have to be overcome, and what to expect at college. Never underestimate your impact as a role model, especially for students who lack them.

APPRAISAL SUPPORT

Appraisal support from teachers can build students' confidence and grow their ambitions, helping them

believe that success is really within their reach and ability. Encouraging messages are a form of this kind of support that can actually change the way your students receive and understand your feedback on their work, researchers say. In studies conducted by psychologists at Stanford University and the University of Texas at Austin, teachers randomly attached one of two sticky notes to student essays they had graded before returning them. Half of the sticky notes contained a generic message letting students know the comments were meant to provide feedback on the paper. The other half of the notes said, “I’m giving you these comments because I have very high expectations and I know you can reach them.” The encouraging note significantly boosted students’ willingness to rewrite the paper—from 62 percent to 87 percent for White students, and from 17 percent to 71 percent for Black students. These results suggest students are motivated to improve when they perceive critical feedback as a desire to help them, not merely as a way to justify a grade.

RIPPLE EFFECTS

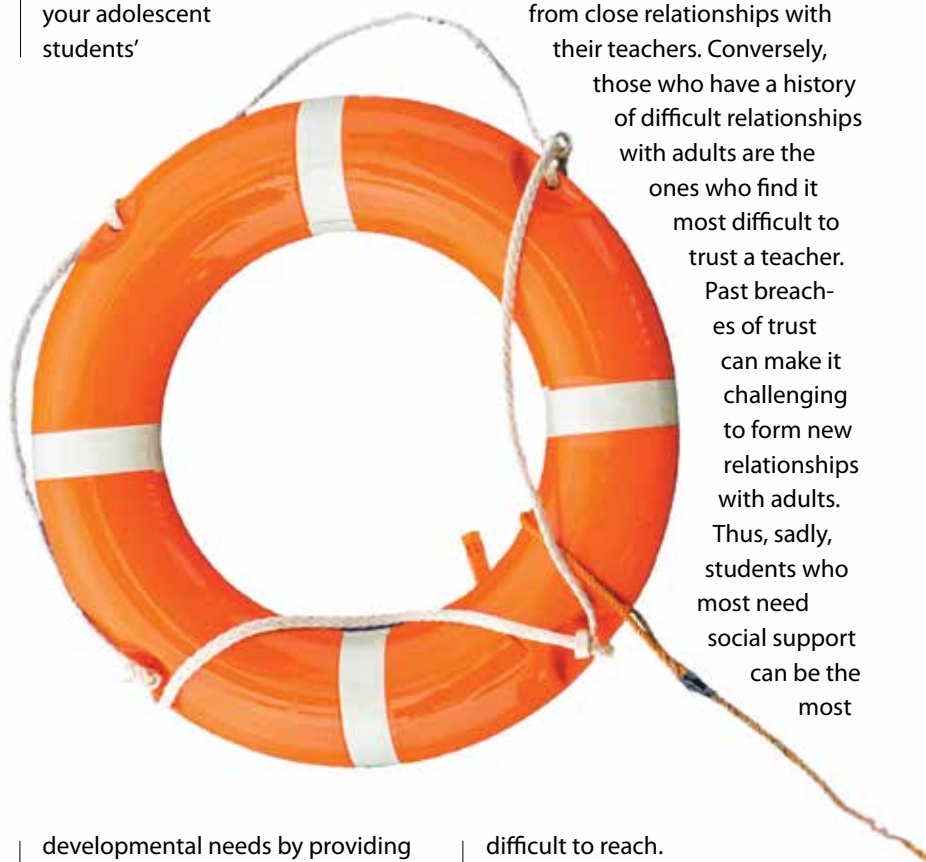
When you seek to build positive relationships with your students and provide social support, you’re likely doing so in hopes of meeting their developmental, emotional, and academic needs. But the effects can mean even more in your classroom: when teachers model supportive relationships, students tend to follow their example and develop more supportive relationships with each other, fostering a collaborative and inclusive environment. Elementary school teachers who demonstrate high levels of general support have

classrooms with more reciprocated friendships, studies have found. Further, when secondary school teachers succeed in incorporating developmentally relevant principles into their classroom interactions, adolescents tend to report improved peer connections.

You can help meet your adolescent students’

dence they’re struggling to achieve.

Social support should be considered in the broader context of students’ relationships with other adults. Students who have warm, encouraging relationships with their parents and other adults in their lives are the students who are most likely to have and derive benefits from close relationships with their teachers. Conversely, those who have a history of difficult relationships with adults are the ones who find it most difficult to trust a teacher. Past breaches of trust can make it challenging to form new relationships with adults. Thus, sadly, students who most need social support can be the most



developmental needs by providing them with both autonomy and structure. Try giving them choices in their learning by offering options for completing projects or assignments and through establishing clear expectations by giving them grading rubrics in advance and/or clear, specific feedback. Adolescents often struggle to balance their emerging needs for independence with their enduring needs for support. You’re well-positioned to provide the support they still need without threatening the indepen-

difficult to reach.

When you attempt to connect with challenging students, try to remember that even if they’re not responsive, they still hear the messages you give them. These efforts can make a difference, even if it’s not immediately apparent, in that students may be more likely to trust their teachers in the future. Spending time with students individually is a good first step and can help to build trust. This can happen before or after class, or during lunch. Research shows that when >>>

WHAT'S THE TEMPERATURE LIKE IN YOUR CLASSROOM?

Some questions to reflect on, adapted from VEA's Effective Classroom Management Participant Manual:

Do you care deeply for your students? Do you know their names? What are they most passionate about? What does their IEP say? Have they had behavioral or attendance issues? Another way to show that you really care is to have high expectations for each student and truly believe he or she can meet them. A good relationship will smooth out a lot of bumps.

Do you require everyone to truly respect each other? Do you guide students effectively when they don't interact with each other appropriately? This includes things such as allowing students to keep their hands raised and moving in excitement while one student is trying to process the question posed.

Do you encourage students to support each other? Students will risk answering a tough question when they feel safe from the belittlement of classmates. Students can support each other's successes (pat on the back, "Good job, man," applause/cheering, etc.).

Is your class safe and do you have overall "with-it-ness"? Are you aware of the subtle things taking place in your class?

Do you hold yourself to the same standards that you hold your students to? So you show them respect? Do you refrain from sarcasm?●



adolescents perceive their teachers as trustworthy people, they show less defiant behavior.

When a supportive connection can be made, it's powerful and can be especially significant for students who otherwise experience the school environment as alienating. In fact, for high school students at risk of academic failure, positive teacher–student relationships can reduce rates of dropping out by nearly half.

It is worth noting that it's impossible to offer all forms of social support to all students simultaneously. Young people are adept at recognizing inauthenticity. Try to identify the types of social support that draw on your natural strengths and focus on the students you suspect may not be receiving adequate support from others in their lives. While no teacher can provide all forms of support, we can all provide some. Students will have other opportunities during their schooling to receive other forms of social support from other teachers or adults.

You're in the classroom to help ensure young people lead fulfilling and productive lives, and it's not enough to focus exclusively on curriculum and instruction. Socially supportive gestures can have profound impacts. Social support may provide students with a sense of psychological safety that allows them to take risks, ask for help, and experience failure in the service of their learning.●

*Wittrup is a researcher and graduate student in the Clinical Psychology Program at the University of Virginia. Willingham is a professor of psychology at UVA and the author of several books, including *Why Don't Students Like School?* and *Raising Kids Who Read*.*

What's Red4Ed and Why Are We Doing

Here's how you can take part.

Public schools around Virginia and across the U.S. have been filled with educators sporting red every Wednesday for the last few months, and it's not because they're just making a fashion statement.

Wearing #Red4Ed on Wednesdays is a clear message from teachers and support professionals that we're tired of the constant uphill battle we must fight to serve students caused by budget cuts and underfunding.

It's us saying that our young people deserve better than the often-outdated resources they're getting—and so do the professional educators who work with them.

It's us shining a spotlight on how so many of us can no longer afford to stay in the profession we chose because we love the work and it's all we've ever wanted to do. It doesn't help our students to see a constant stream of new faces because of school staff turnover. And there's just no way to reasonably explain the fact that Virginia's teachers are currently paid \$9,218 less than the national average salary for teachers.



It's us pointing out that Virginia is the 8th wealthiest state in the country but the 9th worst in cuts to public education.

It's us standing with VEA President Jim Livingston when he says, "We have to put our money where our mouth is."

That's what all the red is about. For far too long, we've listened to public officials talk a good game about public schools and how much they value and appreciate them, only to see that value and appreciation all but disappear when funding decisions are

made. Our General Assembly has a constitutional obligation to "seek to ensure that an educational program of high quality is established and continually maintained" throughout the commonwealth. Wearing red is saying that their current efforts are making such a system more difficult for us to create, not easier.

Red4Ed is a way for all of us to raise our voices, to say loudly and clearly, "Enough is enough!" A tide of red in our schools sends a message that we're not just going to smile and sigh if schools continue to remain

underfunded.

One fast and easy way to do this is to email our governor, Ralph Northam. For some easy directions, check out the "Send a Message" box below.

Another step is to be in Richmond for VEA's 2019 Lobby Day on January 28. Nothing moves legislators like numbers and stories. We can show up in impressive numbers in January, and tell legislators the true stories of what's happening in our schools—and what's not happening.

Help them see red. ●

Send a Message

It only takes a click to get your message to Governor Northam. Go to <https://actionnetwork.org/letters/fund-our-schools-now>. There, you'll find a little bit of background information and a form to use for your message. Let the governor know what you're up against as you're trying to offer Virginia's kids a great public school!



A Story that **MUST** Be Told

Teaching young people the lessons of the Holocaust is our best chance to confront genocide in today's world.

By Nicole Korsen

When I was first asked to write about the importance of Holocaust education, I absolutely believed in its urgency. However, I was concerned about conveying that urgency and about emphasizing that this is not only a "Jewish concern." And then 11 worshippers at a Pittsburgh synagogue were senselessly gunned down. A few days prior, two African-Americans were killed at a Kentucky grocery store after a failed attempt at a church shooting. And a few days before that, pipe bombs were sent to prominent government officials because of their political views. It isn't a Jewish thing, it isn't a black thing, and it isn't a political thing—it's a cycle of violence that affects us all and must be addressed. The time is now.

My father, who is not a teacher, has received hundreds of thank-you notes from students. He's not a very good public speaker either, never staying on topic and rarely answering the questions he's asked. Yet, after he speaks, he is always inundated with gratitude. Some of the notes are perfunctory, but many are filled with promises never to give up and to speak out against injustice.

Jack Wagschal, my dad, is a Holocaust survivor, and very few young people today have ever met one. Some haven't even met a Jewish person. Since I began my second career as a

teacher eight years ago, he's made the journey across the Potomac from Maryland many times to meet and talk with my students.

He has no set presentation and no two talks are ever the same. He doesn't focus on the dark and shadowy details of his story, but instead on the values he has come to live by because of the events that shaped his life as a child. He urges students to adopt similar values and always stresses the importance of education, because he was never able to finish high school, something he had to compensate for as a refugee after WWII. He tells my freshman English students repeatedly to stay in school, and, much to my delight as a teacher and mom to



two teenage boys, to listen to their teachers and parents. He stresses other core beliefs, too, mostly centered on hard work, respect for oneself and others, and the importance of family. He talks about the need to look out for one another and to speak up if witnessing injustice, no matter how small.

What he doesn't tell them is the importance of sharing his personal story. That's where I come in, and it's where I hope you'll come in, too.

Growing up, my two older brothers and I were very independent latch-key kids; my rides to the dentist were more likely to be with one of them than with one of our working

parents. I learned responsibility early, but when I was in third grade and heard the word "Holocaust" for the first time, and then about our personal connection to it, the idea of responsibility took on a whole new meaning. The moment I heard what my dad, his parents, and his brother and sister had survived, my life's responsibility was unknowingly thrust upon me. It is an odd thing to be the child of a survivor, to have a story that you feel must be told, to figure out who you should be telling it to and when, and then to realize that the act of sharing it may not be enough.

Their story is a simple, yet remarkable, one of loyalty, wits, and

hope. The details differ depending on which sibling you hear it from as they were all very young, but we have several items that document it for us, thanks to a book we came across by the organization that saved their lives, l'Association de Juifs de Belgique (AJB). What is certain is that sometime in 1943, my grandfather was awakened in the night at his Belgium home and sent to a work camp, along with the other men in his apartment building. He managed to escape from the camp and hid on a farm in France, pretending to be deaf and mute so he wouldn't give himself away by speaking his native Flemish. He survived because of his cleverness and incredible determi- >>>

nation to return to his family.

After he left, my grandmother fell ill and was hospitalized. She was taken from her hospital bed and placed on the last transport to Auschwitz. I really don't understand how, but like my grandfather, she survived because of her strength and determination to get back to her family. When she first stepped off the train upon arrival and faced "selection," her face was flushed with illness. It was mistaken for a healthy glow and she was sent to work instead of death. She never talked much about her time there, but at liberation she weighed just 65 pounds.

My father and his two siblings, a brother and a sister, now considered orphans, were placed in a home run by a group of non-Jewish women and were "protected." The Nazis would occasionally come looking for children to take so they could fill their quotas, but at those times the Wagschal children were sent to hiding places or just into a nearby forest. My dad, only four years old when he arrived at the house, once survived for weeks living on berries in those woods. They were fortunate, fed and cared for until the end of the war by women who risked their lives to help them. Even more miraculous was that they found their parents at a displaced persons camp after liberation.

I never felt capable of understanding what I should do with my family's story. It felt so much bigger than me, but I knew it couldn't go unheard. I shared it every chance I got, starting when I wrote his story on five index cards and presented it to my third-grade Hebrew School class. From then on, I worked it into as many school projects as I could.

As powerful as the Wagschal story is, its limited audience was preventing it from making a real difference. I was

working in the communications field, getting paid a lot of money to communicate about things I didn't feel passionate about. Meanwhile, in Rwanda and then Bosnia, something very similar to the Holocaust was happening. Six million Jews and five million others were wiped out and it seemed to be happening again. People were not learning from those mistakes and my storytelling was doing nothing to help.

I quit my job to stay home with my second-born son and became a volunteer tour guide for inner-city school groups at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C. During one tour, I watched a group of students transform from disrespectful, disengaged teenagers into slack-jawed, questioning, active learners as they moved through the timeline of events. In the purposeful way the museum tells the story, these students saw firsthand how this was not something that happened overnight, that every choice of every person mattered and contributed to what was to come. The tour was just the vehicle to help them understand a little about the plight of marginalized minorities and current violations of human rights here and around the world. They connected because most of them were part of a minority group; those who weren't had still witnessed acts of discrimination and prejudice.

Once in the classroom, I was frustrated by how little time there was after covering the vast ninth-grade English curriculum, and, that as meaningful as my father's visits were, there wasn't time to take that understanding to the next level. Of course, there was the seventh-grade history unit, the eighth-grade

reading of *The Diary of Anne Frank* and the 10-grade reading of *Night*, but that was about it. I didn't feel that another Rwanda and certainly another Holocaust will be prevented by a cursory pass through a few pieces of Holocaust literature and a basic knowledge of its timeline.

Finally, last summer, came TOLI: I found myself in New York with 25 educators in the home of a deceased Holocaust survivor. The Olga Lengyel Institute for Holocaust Studies and Human Rights (TOLI, www.toli.us) is an annual two-week, intensive program led by a board of directors named by Olga herself. I knew it would be the game-changer I'd been looking for.

As we went around the table in Olga's dining room introducing ourselves, I found that only three of us were Jewish. There were people from all over the country and even Greece and Poland, and they were Christians, Mormons, atheists, LGBTs, blacks, whites, and Asians. We were all so different, yet we came together to preserve the very right to be exactly who we are. One thing tied us all together: a passion to "prevent the past from becoming the future." Everyone in that room believed that education was the way to do that. And it clearly was so much more than a "Jewish" thing.

One of the unique aspects of the program is that because participants are from so many places, satellite programs are developed and run by TOLI participants. Currently, there are over a dozen satellites across the U.S., reaching an estimated 2,000 educators since 2006. These educators have taken the lessons of the Holocaust to their classrooms and used them to help young people understand and act against social injustice, bigotry, and hatred. In the summer of 2020, along with a government teacher colleague,



I will open such a satellite for Northern Virginia educators. Each satellite has a specific focus; ours will likely include the work being done to memorialize lynchings and to mark slave cemeteries here in Loudoun County.

When I hear about the success some of my fellow TOLI participants are having in their classrooms with this difficult dialogue, I feel empowered and supported. They're working with their students to promote acceptance and understanding, and I know we're moving forward.

TOLI is clear that lessons from the Holocaust should be used as a springboard to impart lessons of human rights, dangers of complicity, and understanding ourselves and the choices we make. When done right, teaching about the Holocaust does not lessen any other atrocity or genocide, but because of its size, scope, and unprecedented destruction of the world as we knew it, it holds a unique spot in history that must be taught.

In April, we hosted the first Adopt-a-Survivor program at my school. This time, in addition to my dad, we invited five other Holocaust survivors to join us in a commemoration and "adoption" event. The premise was simple: after remembering the worst genocides around the world,

each survivor met with a group of 30-40 students, told their stories, and engaged them in conversation. The students could then choose to officially "adopt" them by pledging to tell their stories back in their home countries and to light a personalized candle for them and those lost every year on January 27, International Holocaust Remembrance Day. Over 60 official adoptions were made and as the relationships take shape, the conversations are continuing.

There's an inspirational song in the film "Freedom Writers" as Ms. Gruel finds her way in leading her students to acceptance, understanding, and change. The lyrics say, "This is how you do it" and after a lot of small steps, I think I have finally learned how to do it. You take it beyond the living room, the classroom, and the walls of the school. You take it beyond the capacity of one teacher or even one survivor. You put it directly in the hands of the next generation. You implore them to share the story, share the message, and most importantly, to never forget. ●

Korsen (nicole.korsen@lcps.org), a member of the Loudoun Education Association, is an English teacher at Dominion High School.

Holocaust Teaching Resources

A Teacher's Guide to the Holocaust.

Produced by the Florida Center for Instructional Technology, this guide offers an overview of Holocaust events and people. You can learn more and link to it at the NEA website: www.nea.org/tools/lessons/73753.htm.

The United States Holocaust

Memorial Museum. The museum's website offers ways to learn about what happened, remember survivors and victims, and confront genocide: www.ushmm.org.

Virginia Holocaust Museum.

Located in Richmond, this museum's website offers sections of resources for both teachers and students: www.vaholocaust.org.

The Olga Lengyel Institute for Holocaust Studies and Human

Rights. This organization's website proclaims "Never again begins in the classroom" and offers historical and education information: www.toli.us. ●

‘We Can Do This–Together’

New VEA Executive Director Brenda Pike is on a mission to help members join together, step up, and make public education better for both students and educators.



You'd be hard-pressed to find anyone who understands the ins and outs of a state education association better than new VEA Executive Director Brenda Pike. She's been a high school English teacher and active Association member in Tennessee, a UniServ Director in the Volunteer State, a manager of UniServ Directors in Texas, and twice an Association executive director, in Indiana and Alabama.

When she began work at VEA in October, where she'll oversee

the work of more than 50 Association employees around the commonwealth, Dr. Pike also became the first woman to serve as executive director in our organization's history.

A few of her thoughts as she begins her VEA career:

ON PUBLIC EDUCATION.

"It's the great equalizer—or should be. I am most passionate about creating, preserving, and improving forward-thinking education policy that creates access and opportunity for all students regardless of who they are or where they live."

ON THE ROLE OF THE VEA.

The VEA is every member, spread out across our commonwealth, and I view the union as the most important advocate for the institution of public education, students, and our members. I have quite a bit of experience helping local members organize, build, and exercise their power, and I believe that here in Virginia there is not a single valid reason we can't recruit and retain more members, win on the issues we need to win at the local or state level, and create capacity for even greater growth as time goes on."

ON COLLECTIVE ACTION.

"It all starts with local members and local associations. When groups of members take it upon themselves to make sure everybody in their worksite belongs to the union, they can use the power of that collective group of people to change the things that need changing at that worksite. To any who are troubled by the current reality in your school,

I say: What is the reality you *want* your colleagues and your students to experience? And what are you willing to do to change that reality? If we lay the groundwork, every one of our local associations should be able to meet and confer with its school division and speak from a position of strength, because they are speaking with the au-

belong. When a new teacher came into our school, we had three or four people talk to that person and share why they belonged to the WCEA. We'd talk about the things we cared about and find out what the new person cared about, too. And we always had a membership form filled out and ready to be signed.

We need to bring that human

“YOU’RE GOING TO OFTEN HEAR ME SAY, ‘YOU CAN DO THIS!’ YOU CAN. AND WE’LL DO IT TOGETHER. VEA WANTS TO CHANGE THE WORLD AND WE CAN DO IT, IF WE HAVE ENOUGH PEOPLE ALL WORKING IN THE SAME DIRECTION.”

thority of *all* school employees. Acting collectively works: I've experienced it as a teacher and union member and as a UniServ Director and as a manager and executive director in four states. People will join their local union when they believe that it will help them address the conditions they want to address—so that students can learn better and so we have better working conditions and compensation."

ON HER TEACHING AND UNION BACKGROUND.

I taught in a very small rural school district in western Tennessee. Weakley County has about 35,000 residents and maybe 26 faculty members in the school where I taught, and that included the principal. There are advantages to that; you get to know everyone. And we took it upon ourselves in the Weakley County Education Association to make sure that there wasn't a single person in any of our buildings who did not know what our union did, what we stood for, and why it was important to

touch to every local association in Virginia.

ON THE FUTURE.

Our only limits are the ones we've allowed to keep us down, to keep us silent, to close our door and do our jobs, and to try to cope alone rather than join with our colleagues and make the change we want to see.

You're going to often hear me say, "You can do this!" You can. And we'll do it together. VEA wants to change the world and we can do it, if we have enough people all working in the same direction.

Let's see what educators in Virginia can do. I am very excited to be here with you to find out. ●

Dr. Pike's educational background includes a B.A. from Union University in Jackson, TN, an M.S. from the University of Tennessee at Martin, and both an Ed.S and Ed.D from the University of Memphis.



(Clockwise from above): Allison Batty of Fairfax kicked off VEA's 2018 ESP Conference; keynote speaker Pamela Bell, Director of Family & Community Engagement for Henrico County Public Schools; VEA Vice President James Fedderman gave the conference's closing speech; members did hands-on activities during a presentation.



Support Professionals Empowered at Annual VEA ESP Conference

"What would happen in our schools if none of you showed up for work?" Pam Bell asked in her keynote speech at VEA's Education Support Professionals Conference in Richmond.

The answer, according to Bell, a longtime educator now serving as Director of Family & Community Engagement for Henrico County Public Schools, is not pretty. In her presentation, entitled "Who You Are Makes a Difference," she got the conference off to a high-energy and humorous start, saying that our children would bear the brunt of missing ESPs, having to do without the hundreds of "little things we take for granted every day."

The conference was two days of inspiration and information for ESP members from across Virginia, offering breakout sessions on topics including leadership development, lifelong learning, social justice, money management, and member benefits, along with numerous networking opportunities.

"We need these conferences to be reinforced and stay current, and VEA conferences always do that for me," says Diane Outlaw, a media assistant and member of the Education Association of Norfolk. Octavia Harris, a school secretary and Arlington Education Association member, agrees. "There's so much information and every time I come it gets better," she says. "We learned something about all aspects of being an ESP and it's great to be with all the people. As ESPs, we really do a lot and are capable of a lot."

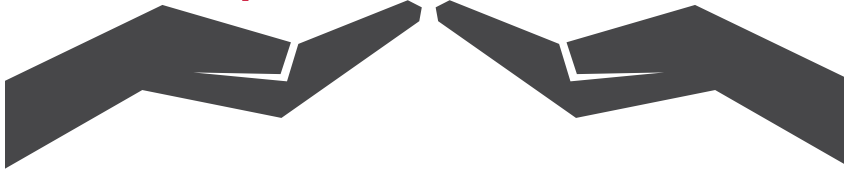
Additional speakers at the conference included VEA President Jim Livingston, VEA Vice President James Fedderman, and the Association's ESP of the Year, Theresia Rollins Anderson of the Fairfax Education Association.

Fedderman closed the conference, telling attendees he began his career as a school custodian and urging them to never give up on themselves or their students: "Our schools wouldn't work without you. ●"

Is This Equity?

\$16,551

\$4,000



Money is not all that matters in determining the quality of education we can provide for our students, but funding certainly plays a critical, meaningful role. Understanding that, consider this fact from the VEA's Office of Government Relations and Research report, "Virginia's Educational Disparities 2016-17," released in October:

In the 2016-17 school year, nine Virginia localities spent more than \$10,000 in local dollars on every student in their public schools, with the highest being Arlington, at \$16,651. During that same school year, 59 localities spent less than \$4,000 per pupil. ●

CALENDAR

rally

VEA Lobby Day

January 28, 2019

**Bell Tower, State Capitol
Richmond**

conferences

**Recruiting and Retaining
Teachers of Color**

February 15-16, 2019

**Norfolk State University
vea.link/ToC2019**

Broadening Horizons, for Your Students and You

Are you ready to bring the world to your students? You can open some very significant doors for them, and yourself, by applying for the NEA Foundation Global Learning Fellowship. Applications are now open for this chance for classroom teachers to develop their own global competence and prepare their students to thrive in our increasingly interconnected world.

The yearlong, fully-funded fellowship includes:

- An online course in teaching global competence
- A two-day professional development workshop in Washington, D.C. (Fall 2019)
- Webinars discussing global issues
- A nine-day international field study to Peru (Summer 2020)

K-12 public school classroom teachers who are Association members can apply. To learn more and to start the process, visit www.neafoundation.org/for-educators/global-learning-fellowship/. ●



VEA Welcomes Joel Coon



Joel Coon is the new Government Relations Specialist in the VEA's Office of Government Relations and Research. He'll oversee the Association's work in campaigns and elections and serve as staff liaison to the VEA Fund for Children and Public Education.

Coon brings 15 years of campaign experience on everything from local school board to presidential elections. ●



A lifetime of service. In honor of his decades-long commitment to the Fairfax Education Association, as well as to the VEA and NEA, the FEA recently named its renovated board and conference room in honor of Walter J. Mika, third from left in the photo above. Mika is a former FEA and VEA president, NEA Board of Directors member, and Virginia Retirement System trustee, as well as a founding member of the FEA-Retired Council.

With him are (l-r) Rick Baumgartner, Kimberly Adams, and Mimi Dash, all former FEA presidents, current FEA president Kevin Hickerson, and former FEA president Michael Hairston. The renaming ceremony was also attended by four General Assembly members: Senator Richard Saslaw and Delegates David Bulova, Mark Keam, and Vivian Watts. ●

Conference photos by Reilly Bradshaw, illustration by iStock

VEA Will Honor Deserving Educators, Organizations

Association members and others who work for the good of our young people and our public schools deserve recognition for their outstanding efforts. To ensure that some of them get that recognition, VEA's annual awards program honors salutes their excellence; nominations are now open for the following VEA awards:

Friend of Education Award: VEA's highest honor recognizes an individual or organization whose leadership, acts or support has significantly benefited education, education employees or students in Virginia. Nomination deadline: January 18, 2019.

Fitz Turner Award: Honors outstanding contributions in intergroup relations and the enhancement of respect for human and civil rights. Nomination deadline: January 25, 2019.

Mary Hatwood Futrell Award: Honors leadership in fostering equality in educational opportunity and promoting equity and excellence in public education. Nomination deadline: January 25, 2019.

Barbara Johns Youth Award: Honors a student or student organization whose activities promote the dignity and esteem of others. Nomination deadline: January 25, 2019.

Award for Teaching Excellence: The highest honor VEA gives for creativity and excellence in the classroom. Nomination deadline: February 15, 2019.

Education Support Professional of the Year: Honors the contributions of an ESP to his or her school, community and profession. Nomination deadline: January 11, 2019.

A+ Award for Membership Growth: Honors local Associations for growth, given in three size categories. Nomination deadline: January 11, 2019.

For more information, visit www.veanea.org/grants.●



FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT WWW.VEANEA.ORG/GRANTS.

Correction

In our last issue, we listed several VEA workshops available to educators, including cultural competence, diversity, and conflict resolution. Those workshops are available through VEA's Office of Human and Civil Rights, not the Office of Teaching and Learning. To schedule, visit veanea.org/home/training-and-workshops.htm.●

PRESIDENT'S
MESSAGE

Building— and Using— *Our Power*

For over 150 years, almost every victory for public education in Virginia has been won through the determination and perseverance of VEA and its local associations! Funding for books, pensions and medical leave, improvements in working conditions—none of these were given to us. We fought for all of them.

Have we achieved everything we set our sights on? Of course not. Pay is too low, and inequitable funding still harms Virginia kids and educators. In too many localities, educators are not respected and overburdened.

So, what's our answer? We're going to change the equation by building our Union, increasing our legislative and political strength, and working for better pay and funding, getting every eligible educator to join and to play a role in their Association.

This year, I've been talking about four major milestone periods that undergird a unified VEA effort to accomplish all that.

The first milestone was the recent election, and we gained substantial ground. Most notably, our support helped send three brand-new pro-public education candidates to Congress: Jennifer Wexton, Abigail Spanberger, and Elaine Luria.

We're currently running a campaign to urge Governor Northam to increase K-12 funding in his budget amendments. Have you sent your



letter and urged others to do the same? The easy instructions are on page 13.

The second milestone is Lobby Day (January 28) and the 2019 General Assembly session. Now is the time to pull together your team of members to come to Richmond for Lobby Day. Have you helped create a large presence to speak with legislators and advocate at our noontime rally that day?

The third milestone is Election 2019. All 100 seats in the Virginia House of Delegates and 40 seats in the state Senate are up for grabs. VEA members will be integral in supporting pro-public education candidates to win those seats.

And the fourth milestone begins in December 2019 with Gov. Northam's two-year budget leading into the 2020 General Assembly session.

We made significant gains during the first milestone, and if we do the same on milestones two and three, we'll be in a great position for a substantially better K-12 budget in January 2020.

Achieving these things will require the commitment of not just educators but also community partners, administrators, school board members, and many others.

Now is the time for action.
Now is the time to lead. We are VEA! ●



REA's Robinson Named Virginia's Teacher of the Year

Richmond Education Association member **Rodney A. Robinson**, who teaches history at the Virgie Binford Education Center, was named

Virginia's 2019 Teacher of the Year. Robinson, who has taught in Richmond Public Schools for 19 years, was announced as this year's winner by

Virginia First Lady Pam Northam at a ceremony held at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts.



The Binford Center is a school within Richmond's Juvenile Detention Center, and Robinson refers to his students as "the most vulnerable kids in society," but also his inspiration, pledging to "fight to my last heartbeat for them."

He holds a master's degree in administration and supervision from Virginia Commonwealth University and began teaching at Binford in 2015.

Robinson was selected from Virginia's previously-named Regional Teachers of the Year, one of whom is **Timothy W. Cotman, Jr.** of the Arlington Education Association and Thomas Jefferson Middle School.

As Virginia's new Teacher of the Year, Robinson received an engraved crystal apple and cash awards totaling \$8,500, among other prizes. He will also be Virginia's nominee in the National Teacher of the Year contest, the winner of which will be announced in a White House ceremony next spring. ●



How **NOT** to Get Snowed Under by Paperwork

A desk is an ideal place for paper to pile. And pile. And pile. That's why teacher Sarah Hudson devised a fool-proof method for eliminating the towering piles before they buried her. "I got rid of my desk!" she says.

Sometimes educators get attached to their papers. This is very dangerous and should be avoided, according to Mary Pat Spon. "Touch papers only once," she advises. "Then skim, file, or toss."

There's strength in numbers, so don't be afraid to enlist the help of your students, says Sherell Lanoiz. "Review and correct assignments in class with students," she says. "They get immediate feedback on how well they've done and they can ask questions about mistakes."

While her students are working, Kathy Schaub circulates the room, not unlike a hawk or other predator seeking its prey. When she sees that a student is finished with an assignment, she grabs it and grades it. "That way by the time they've finished, it's been checked, they've had an opportunity to make corrections and I can give them the help they may need."

A common-sense approach to avoid being buried by paperwork is to limit its growth, says Susan M. Peyton. "I don't make too many extra copies, and I save most of my handouts on computers. Also, I keep student work organized in folders that I take home to grade. If I don't plan to grade it, I don't have the students turn it in."

Another key survival strategy is to have your red pen ready at all times, like Russell Ibero. He grades papers during recess, in the lunch line, and during lunch. If he's feeling ambitious, he grades papers between weight-lifting sets.

But the best strategy is being able to choke the paper monster at the source. It's the 21st century—go paperless! Take

advantage of technology, like Bernice Krieger who is paper-free and stores all of her lessons and grading on Google Docs.

"Stop handing out papers and start doing more meaningful work with your students," is Lisa Sato's paperless strategy. "Project-based learning is a more effective way to teach curriculum while connecting it to real-life problem solving," she says.

Even with digital technology and paperless assignments, Beckee Morrison admits that paperwork is still winning in her school life, but she hasn't given up. She performs regular staff mailbox triage. Only the things she needs are immediately taken to her classroom. She allows the rest to pile up until she's ready to deal with it properly.

Morrison also has a "Ready to Grade" box, with a slot for each period. "Kids like handing you their finished paper, so sometimes I play a triumphal march for kids strutting up to the 'Ready to Grade' box," she says. "Copeland's 'Fanfare for the Common Man' works well." ●

Be There for Your Students When You See Bullying

Some meaningful advice on educator roles in preventing and responding to bullying, from Rob Lundien, a high school counselor in Riverside, Missouri, provided by NEA.

An important part of our role is to create a safe environment where bullied students can be heard. Listening to these students allows us to better determine their social and emotional needs. We must also work closely with students who are accused of bullying. We want bullies to understand the impact that their actions and words have on others, and we want to ensure that they don't simply shift their abusive behaviors from one student to the next.

Whatever our role, we must remind students that we are their allies and advocates.

We are here to protect them and keep them safe. We know that students

with health, speech, or language impairments, learning disabilities, autism spectrum disorders, and emotional and behavior disorders are especially susceptible to bullying. Around the nation, many schools are also seeing an increase in bullying directed at LGBTQ students, students of color, and immigrant students.

And the impact of bullying persists even after school years are over. A study a few years ago found that people who were bul-

lied as students are more likely to have anxiety disorders, depression, and suicidal thoughts as adults.

No matter what our job titles are in the schools, we can pay closer attention to how students are interacting with each other. If we see something, we must do something. We must also teach and encourage our students who witness bullying behaviors, the bystanders, to take an active role in intervening and helping to stop



these situations.

Educators are, of course, key people in fostering a positive school climate and dealing with bullying, whatever form it takes. That's why we work so hard to build relationships and connect with each of our students – we want to understand their worries and concerns. Whatever insights we gain allow us to help them through a crisis, as well as discover their passions and unlock their potential. ●

SO CONCISE: TEACHING IN SIX WORDS (SEE WHAT WE DID THERE?)

Nicholas Ferroni is an educator and activist who's gained national recognition for his teaching methods and education reform advocacy. Recently, on his Twitter account (@nicholasferroni), he challenged teachers to write about their work using only six words. Here's a sampling of the responses:

Making sure the young people win.

Wake up. Make a difference. Repeat.

It's not easy. Love it anyway.

Could've made money. Instead, I mattered.

They come. I teach. We learn.

Buy the shoes with arch support.

Love them when they're most unlovable.

We teach, care, and get criticized.

Aspire to inspire before I expire.

They couldn't. I helped. They can.

Expected to do much with little.

I believe in this next generation.

Sometimes it's OK to break the rules. (See what he did there?)

Please don't keep licking the table!

If only you knew the reality.

Young adults hatching, and I'm there!

Once your teacher, always your teacher.

Need pencil? Two thousand on floor.

Teach smart. Sleep when you can.

One child's life was changed forever.

Seeing the lightbulb come on...amazing!

We are forever their safe place.

Left corporate world. Joined important world.

Not one day is the same.

Changing kids' lives > changing test scores.

I have the best job ever. ●

Illustration and photo by iStock

College Degrees: Not the Only Route to Success

You have students who either don't want to go to college or may not have the academic abilities to do so. If they need encouragement about what their future may hold in today's economy, you can point them to a new study by the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce.

In 2016, there were 13 million good jobs in the U.S. for high school graduates and 16 million for students with middle skills, which is defined as "more education than a high school diploma but less than a B.A., including certificates, certifications, licenses, associate's degrees, and some college coursework."

In the study, Georgetown researchers defined good jobs as "ones that pay at least \$35,000, average \$56,000 for workers with less than a B.A., and average \$65,000 when you include workers with a BA or higher." Of those jobs, 24 percent were filled by workers with middle skills in 2016 and 20 percent by high school graduates.

The study is available at cew.georgetown.edu/3Pathways. ●



Roll Out the Carpet for the Cat!

Sam I Am, Horton (the one with the keen sense of hearing), Yertle the Turtle and, of course, The Cat In the Hat are ready to roll into your classrooms and schools as part of NEA's nationwide annual bash, Read Across America. Every March 2, for 22 years now, students, educators, and community members have gathered at schools, libraries, shopping centers, and just about anywhere to salute reading and underscore its vital role in student success.

It's not too early to begin thinking about your RAA activities—how will you and your students celebrate the power of the written word? There are options galore and you can find many of them on NEA's RAA website, www.nea.org/readacross, where you'll see a wide range of materials as well as looks at past and present celebrations. ●



Is It an Accommodation or a Modification?

According to the International Dyslexia Association:

An **accommodation** is an instructional or test adaptation. It allows a student to demonstrate what he or she knows without fundamentally changing the target skill being taught or measured in testing situations. Accommodations do not reduce learning or performance expectations. Instead, accommodations change the manner or setting in which information is presented or the manner in which students respond.

A **modification** is an instructional or test adaptation that allow a student to demonstrate what he knows or can do, but the target skill is also reduced in some way. Modifications usually lower performance expectations (e.g., lessening the complexity of the items or the task required). ●

VEA to Hold Conference



COME TO ENGAGE in discussions leading to greater diversity in hiring practices across the school divisions in the Commonwealth.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

vea.link/ToC2019 or contact VEA at 800-552-9554. ●

RECRUITING AND RETAINING

TEACHERS OF COLOR

NORFOLK STATE UNIVERSITY FEBRUARY 15-16, 2019

TEAM UP

WITH CALIFORNIA CASUALTY

Give your athletes a sporting chance with a Thomas R. Brown Athletics Grant. Apply to receive \$1,000 to \$3,000 for your middle/high school's team.

The California Casualty Thomas R. Brown Athletics Grant was established to provide support to public school sports programs impacted by reduced budgets.

As an employee of the school and a member of the National Education Association (NEA), you can apply for a grant award for your school's sports program.

Applications received through January 15, 2019 will qualify for 2019 consideration. Recipients will be announced in April 2019.



To apply for a grant, go to:
CalCasAthleticsGrant.com

Grants not available in AK, HI, MA, MI, NY and WI. Please visit CalCasAthleticsGrant.com for full program rules.
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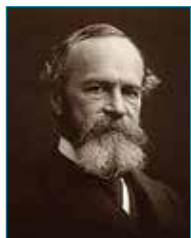
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LEARNING IS SO MUCH MORE THAN A TEST SCORE "AT ITS BEST, EDUCATION HELPS STUDENTS FIND MEANING IN SOCIETY AND IN SELF. EDUCATION SHOULD HELP STUDENTS DEVELOP INTERNAL WILL, CONFIDENCE, AND STRENGTH, SO THEY CAN ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR SHAPING THEIR COMMUNITIES AND WORLD."

— Jonathan Lash, president, Hampshire College



"You can't use an Amazon Echo to answer my question."



ANOTHER REASON EDUCATORS FEEL GOOD ABOUT WHAT THEY DO

"THE GREATEST USE OF LIFE IS TO SPEND IT ON SOMETHING

THAT WILL OUTLAST IT."

— Philosopher William James

VEA Mini-Grants are Fueling Learning and Fun

More fun and more learning will be hitting some classrooms around Virginia, thanks to the 2018-19 VEA Mini-Grants. Here's a list of educators who were awarded funding for their projects:

Laura Provencio and **Wanda Sukanovich** of the Prince William Education Association, for "Colonial Crafts"

Karen Banks of the Loudoun Education Association, for "Don Quixote"

Jessika Crance of the Rockbridge-Lexington Education Association, for "Exceptional Creations"

Jamie Popp from the Bedford County Education Association, for "Flexible Seating for Personalized Learning"

Kristina Childress and **Amanda Dinkle** of the Bedford County Education Association, for "Growing Together Collaborative Garden"

Christina Bohringer of the Education Association of Alexandria, for "Hands-On Math = Engaged Kids"

Megan Cannon of the Loudoun Education Association, for "Integrating Virginia Computer Science Standards into the Fourth-Grade Curriculum"

Lenette Sanders and **Quoteshia Hargett** of the Portsmouth Education Association, for "Lines, Geometric Figures, and Fractions—Oh, My!"

Heather LaBelle of the Spotsylvania Education Association, for "Live Learning"

Tamara Metz and **Mindy Straley** of the Arlington Education Association, for "Middle School Code-A-Thon"

Michelle Copeland and **Carol Kee** of the Loudoun Education Association, for "Our Backyard is Wild"

Emily Stevens of the Bedford County Education Association, for "Pocket Lab Science and Math"

Stephanie Ryan of the Prince William Education Association, for "Readers are Leaders"

Christine Woods of the Hampton Education Association, for "Roman Garden"

Anne Straume of the Albemarle Education Association, for "Rome Wasn't Built In a Day"

Amanda Madden of the Frederick County Education Association, for "Skillastics APE"

Heidi Lang of the Falls Church City Education Association, for "Pun is Pun: Having Fun with Shakespeare". ●



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Is Changing the Lineup the Key to Success for Jaret?

— Courtney Cutright



"What's the matter, buttercup?" I try to banter.

"Don't call me buttercup," Jaret says, trying to suppress a smile as he peers at me through the thick hair that falls over his forehead and obstructs his eyes.

"What's the matter, darling?" I try instead.

"Don't call me darling."

"OK, what would you like me to call you?"

"Fellow human."

"OK, fellow human. Can you fill out your reading log so we can move on with the rest of class?"

This is a typical daily interaction with Jaret, a kid with ADHD, depression, anxiety, along with moderate symptoms of an Autism Spectrum Disorder. His brain and attitude are far from typical, and his behaviors both fascinate and frustrate me.

Earlier in the year, Jaret approached me in the hall mimicking the drill sergeant's lines from the movie "Full Metal Jacket." Thankfully, he edited his language for the middle school hallway; he did not, however, observe the norms of personal space when his face was mere inches from mine.

Jaret is a student who needs a significant amount of attention, sometimes more than a co-teacher, a paraprofessional and I can provide in a 95-minute instructional block. English is his favorite subject. He reads on grade level and prefers classic comic books, in which he frequently buries his nose to avoid other assignments.

Getting him to do his work is difficult. With the help of the IEP team, we have checklists with each teacher's expectations for the day. But Jaret lacks the motivation to complete an assignment unless he sees an immediate reward or benefit. He doesn't seem to care about the work, which

may be too easy. He doesn't care about grades or consequences if he chooses not to work. He's content to tune out the world around him and doodle, read comics, or simply put down his head.

At the suggestion of Jaret's day treatment counselor, I decided to modify his reading log so that instead of only writing a two-sentence response, he could use a comic book page template to write and illustrate his entry. He was excited about it the first day, but less enthusiastic in the days following. Now I'm back to multiple daily nudges to get him to complete the assignment.

In a meeting with Jaret's IEP team and family members, I learned that Jaret has some emotional trauma because of his father's rehab stints and general inconsistency in his life. Jaret's mother reported the need for male role models, noting that he worked well with a male co-teacher last year in English.

The aha-moment came a few weeks later when I saw Jaret interact with a substitute counselor who happened to be male. After moping around and refusing to work in my class, Jaret's face lit up when the male counselor initiated small talk. It was such a drastic shift in Jaret's demeanor that it perplexed me, and I wondered how he might do in classes with male teachers instead of mine, which includes three women.

I carried this for a few days because I felt suggesting Jaret switch out of my class would be like me giving up on him. It really bothered me that he or anyone else would think that but, ultimately, I had to think about what would best serve Jaret.

I looked at the schedule and floated the idea to Jaret's case manager. She was on board and took it up the chain of command. Everyone, including Jaret's mother, seemed to agree that it was worth trying. At the end of the first grading period, which coincides with my deadline for this column, Jaret's schedule will change, and he will move into math and English classes where the content teachers are men.

He's barely pulling a C in my class. On the assignments he chose to do, he earned good grades. The zeroes for missing and refused assignments, of course, caused a drop in his average. Jaret's averages in other classes were much lower, and he's at risk of failing two courses and facing retention.

Hopefully the new surroundings will encourage Jaret to be more productive and to demonstrate the academic work he is capable of performing. ●



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A photograph of six diverse school children running happily towards the camera. They are wearing backpacks and casual clothing. In the background, a large green logo for the Virginia Lottery's 30th anniversary is visible. The logo consists of a large green "30" where the "0" is shaped like a hand holding a pencil, with the words "VIRGINIA LOTTERY" underneath. At the bottom of the image, large white text reads "\$9 BILLION TO EDUCATION" and "30 YEARS OF FUN. THANK YOU, VIRGINIA!"

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