

RCCSD Novice Teacher Education
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Mentoring in March

Spring officially arrives on March 20th. As nature renews itself, it is also a great time to renew ourselves as professionals. The focus question for mentors in March is: **How can we continue to motivate new educators to spring forward as professionals?**

The following list of tips has been adapted from *21st Century Mentor's Handbook: Creating a Culture for Learning* by Paula Rutherford:

- Is your mentee going away for Spring Break? Make a Spring Break Travel Kit with snacks, magazines, and sunscreen for your novice educator. Include a note thanking them for their hard work.
- Review professional goals from the first part of the school year. Set new goals for the last marking period.
- Remind mentees to meet with parents of students whose promotion is in danger.
- Review the procedures and processes for parent conferences focusing on what needs to be done differently at this time of the year.
- Discuss how teaching assignment decisions for the upcoming year are made. Make sure to discuss the reduction in force (RIF) process and be prepared to support the new teacher if he or she must deal with employment changes for the upcoming year.
- Review policies and procedures for administering standardized tests.
- Remind the new teacher that attitudes are contagious. Tell them to speak positively about the upcoming assessments to get their students excited about showing their knowledge.
- Encourage new teachers to let students know that they have been well-prepared for the content and process of testing and that they should just try to do their personal best.
- Review data related to the teacher's DPAS Component V goals and discuss strategies to continue moving toward achieving those goals.
- Remind teachers that they should continue to communicate with parents keeping them informed of the instruction and learning that is occurring in the classroom as well as informing individual parents about any changes in student work or behavior.
- Remind the novice teacher that he/she should always make as many (or more) positive parent contacts as negative contacts.
- Encourage the new teacher to find time to relax and recharge over Spring Break!

Rutherford, P. (2005). *21st Century Mentor's Handbook: Creating a Culture for Learning*. Alexandria, VA: Just Ask Publications.



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Dates to Remember:

- March 8: Lead Mentor Meeting - Self Care PD
- March 13: RCCSD College and Career Fair, 6:30—8:30 at JDHS
- March 29: End of Third Marking Period
- March 30 - April 8: Spring Break



Kylie Truitt—Cooke Elementary School, First Year Teacher and February Above and Beyond Award Recipient

What were you like as a student growing up?

Growing up, I was always enthusiastic about learning. I loved school. My favorite subject was always math because I loved that there was always a right answer. I looked forward to going to school every day and seeing my friends. As I grew up, I was very involved in clubs and sports, such as student government and volleyball.

What or who inspired you to become a teacher?

After my first observation in student teaching, I knew this was what I wanted to be. I loved being able to help students learn and discover new things. It was eye opening to see how much one person could affect 20 minds.

What grade do you teach and what is special about teaching that grade?

I teach third grade at Cooke Elementary. Third grade is so special because the students are learning to be independent, but still need some support to get there. So many things amaze my third graders and it is so exciting to be able to explore things with them for the first time.



“Asking for help just means that you want to be doing the right thing for your students.”

University of Delaware Education Meet Up

The RCCSD Office of Novice Teacher Development participated in a meet and greet event for education majors at the University of Delaware on Wednesday, February 28th. The event was held from 5:30—7:30 in the evening at the Trabant Center. McKean science teacher, Radley Miller, and Early Childhood Lead Mentor, Patricia Dallas, were on hand with Stacie Zdrojewski to help us spread the word about the great things that are happening in Red Clay.



What has surprised you the most about being a teacher?

The part of teaching that has surprised me the most is how every day is different. It is impossible to fully plan for every part of the day in school because there is always something that changes. I have learned to be very flexible and go with the flow.

What is the best part of being a Cooke Cardinal?

The best part of being a Cooke Cardinal is being a part of the Cooke family. The community here has been so welcoming and helpful for my first year of teaching. Everyone is always willing to listen or give me advice. The parents are so involved with their students and are always willing to contribute in whatever ways they can. I feel so lucky to be part of the Cooke Community.

What is a piece of advice you have for new teachers?

One thing I have valued the most in my first year of teaching was seeking help and advice. I am lucky to be a part of a team of five superstar teachers that are always willing to help me. Asking for help just means that you want to be doing the right thing for your students.



Stephanie Jennis — McKean High School UD Student Teacher

What were you like as a student growing up?

As a student growing up, I was extremely passionate about learning. I've always been a person who loves to learn new things and keep an open mind. I have to say, I was a bit of a perfectionist. If I needed to study for a test, I was up early in the morning teaching my stuffed animals the content. If I had a group project to do, I was always the one who wanted to develop a plan of action to complete it. I always wanted to try my best, and school was never easy for me. However, I developed a determined attitude and utilized every resource available to help myself and my peers be successful.

What made you decide to pursue a career in teaching?

Ever since I was born, I knew I wanted to be a teacher. This desire really arose in me when my brother was diagnosed with multiple disabilities. When he was younger, he was truly a genius, knowing his ABCs, how to walk, and how to talk way before I did. But one day, he had a stroke and lost all of that knowledge. Therefore, I took it upon my five year old self to reteach him. I would come home from school, set up my classroom, and teach him in the best way I knew how - with a whiteboard, activities, songs and movie clips. At ten, I began a mini school in my home with one of my best friends. We created schedules and lockers for all my neighbors, made our own classrooms, and taught lessons in fun, exciting ways. Using this knowledge, my mom and I started an organization that helped children with disabilities to be involved in after school programs such as sports, art, photography, drama, and even employment training. I was actively involved in teaching classes and developing curriculum for social skills, customer service, and even new skills like Photoshop which I wasn't quite aware existed! Therefore, when I got to college, I knew there wasn't anything I'd rather do than spend every day being inspired by students.

Who was your favorite teacher and what made him/her special?

My favorite teacher was my middle school English teacher. Every day, I would walk in, and no matter how busy he was, he would always check up on me and ask me how I was doing. He made an active effort to always get involved and wonder what I was doing with my new volunteer venture or teaching expedition. He always had a new, exciting unit for us whether it was creating our own film noir, our own magazines, or even helping us through a long research paper. I learned so much more about the world around me, and he expanded my perspective further than any teacher ever had. Since then, he's allowed me to observe his classroom to get ideas, and he even sent me a good luck video on my first day of student teaching! If I can transmit his energy, his passion, and his love for the students, I know I'll be able to touch a student's life like he has mine.

What is your favorite part of your student teaching experience so far?

So far, my favorite part of the student teaching experience has been the moment when my students walk in and ask, "So what are we doing today?" I love being able to plan lessons, think of activities, and transform content in a way that piques their interest and has them on the edge of their seats. I also love nothing more than to walk around and jump into their conversations, to see the issues they're grappling with and to help them illustrate their understanding in the most creative, intriguing way possible. I have the opportunity every day to get to know who my students are and understand their passions, interests, and unique identities every single day. To me, there is no greater honor than that.

What is one piece of advice that you would give to other student teachers?

Encouragement, optimism, and passion. Every single day, these three things should be coursing through your veins and pumping through your heart. Live and breathe your content. Show the students that there's a possibility to fall in love with your "job," to feel like you never have worked a day in your life. Show the students that no matter what, if everyone else leaves them or doesn't believe in them, you'll always be the one standing there to encourage them to keep pushing on. Show them that you'll never leave them, and you'll be rooting for them no matter what. By doing so, you can truly earn their respect, and you can push them to reach their fullest potential.



*Student Teacher Spotlight:
Stephanie Jennis, Student Teacher at McKean High School*

Novice Teacher Education Lending Library

The Office of Novice Teacher Education currently has copies of professional books that available for lending. If you would like to borrow a book, please contact: Stacie Zdrojewski via email stacie.zdrojewski@redclay.k12.de.us or by phone at 302-552-3792.

Available titles include:

- *21st Century Mentor's Handbook: Creating a Culture for Learning*
- *Classroom Instruction that Works*
- *How Children Succeed*
- *Mentoring New Teachers*
- *Ordinary Magic*
- *Research-Based Strategies: Narrowing the Achievement Gap for Under-Resourced Students*
- *Smart but Scattered*
- *Teach Like a Champion*
- *The Cage-Busting Teacher*
- *The First Days of School*
- *The First-Year Teacher's Survival Guide*
- *Understanding Poverty*
- *Why Didn't I learn this in College?*
- *Working with Parents: Building Relationships for Student Success*
- *Working with Students: Discipline Strategies for the Classroom*



Student Teacher Highlights

Yearlong Wilmington University intern, Miss Nicole Thompson, rocked her Kimono and Geta shoes while reading aloud *Suki's Kimono* to the third-grade class. Nicole is spending the year at Richey Elementary learning with her mentor teacher, Angela Morrow. Talk about bringing learning and cultural diversity to life. Way to go, Nicole and Angela!



Learning to Manage Stress

Teaching is a very rewarding and, sometimes, stressful profession. It is important that teachers find ways to manage stress so that they remain passionate and enthusiastic educators. When stress becomes too great, students are affected and we lose potentially great educators to burn out. The following tips for managing stress come from *The First-Year Teacher's Survival Guide* by Julia G. Thompson:

- **Make time for yourself** - Eat well, exercise, plan fun personal activities. Your students will benefit from having a happy, healthy teacher.
- **Prioritize your time to work efficiently while you are at school** - While at school, tackle tasks that can only be done at school such as making copies, organizing supplies and tidying your room. The more efficiently you use your time, the less work you will have to take home.
- **Focus on the task at hand** - Don't try to multi-task. Choose a task and focus on it until it is finished.
- **Set boundaries** - You do not have to be on call at all times. Learn to nicely decline activities that are too time consuming or unproductive. As a novice teacher, it is important that you learn your craft before becoming too entrenched in extra opportunities. Spend quality time on your instruction and content. When you have mastered those areas, you will have more time for extra responsibilities.
- **Keep your career worries in perspective** - Ask yourself, "Will this matter tomorrow, in a month, or in a year?" Focus on the big picture and do not let small issues steal your peace of mind.
- **Always have something to look forward to** - Make plans with friends and family. Plan a weekend outing sometime in the future. Having future plans can help you stay happy in the present moment.
- **Don't forget that your new profession is only one part of your life** - You want to be a great educator, so you work hard. Try to keep it in perspective that your career is a large part of your life but it is not your whole life. Working twenty-four hours a day is not healthy for anyone. Teaching is a lifestyle. Learning to manage that lifestyle is key to remaining a healthy, happy and productive educator!

Thompson, J. G. (2013). *The First-Year Teacher's Survival Guide* (Third ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Student Teaching in Red Clay



Currently, we have approximately 70 student teachers and interns placed in the Red Clay Consolidated School District. These student teachers come to us from the University of Delaware, Delaware State University and Wilmington University. The goal of our student teaching program is to aid in the development of high-quality educators who will, hopefully, become employed in Red Clay after graduation. The district also benefits from having extra help in educating our students. Student teachers are a vital part of our community who are important members of the schools in which they serve. They bring fresh ideas to the classroom, help with daily planning and management, and provide extra support to our students. We are fortunate to have these novice educators choosing Red Clay for their student teaching placements!

Crishona Green, DSU Student Teacher, Richey Elementary

Gabrielle McClung —Heritage Elementary DSU Student Teacher

What were you like as a student growing up?

I have always loved learning and trying new things as a child. My thirst for learning motivated me to always do more in order to learn more; thus, grooming me into a hard working student. To this day, I am still motivated to learn more than I did the day before so that I can apply all of the new knowledge I have gained.

What made you decide to pursue a career in teaching?

Dancing has always been a passion of mine, and, at the age of thirteen, I began to choreograph pieces for my middle school peers and young church members. Although I come from a family of educators, which include my mom, grandmother, and aunts, teaching my choreography to others is what really inspired me to not only teach others the performing art that I adored so much, but it also helped me fall in love with the art of teaching. At that moment, I decided that I wanted to help others fall in love with learning just like I did.

Who was your favorite teacher and what made him/her special?

My 11th grade English teacher, Miss Dicceco, helped me fall in love again with something I gave



“This is a school that is filled with pride and if I had the opportunity to do it all over again, I would choose the Heritage Eagles every time!”

up after moving on to middle school – reading. She challenged me to go above and beyond my comfort zone all while maintaining my interest no matter how frustrated I became. As a teacher, she finally helped me understand the idea of never giving up and her ability to make an honor student like myself see that there is always something greater to strive for continues to motivate me today.

What is your favorite part of your student teaching experience so far?

Since I love learning, I am constantly looking for ways to become a better educator. The entire staff, my mentor teacher, and the students in my class are pushing me to new heights. Being able to learn from those I am teaching as well as the wonderful staff around me is so rewarding. Every day I am learning something new that I know I can and will use throughout my career for years to come.

What is one piece of advice that you would give to other student teachers?

For other student teachers, the best piece of advice I can offer is to embrace your mistakes. Remembering that the word “student” comes first in the title of student teacher and will always help you remember that you are still learning and growing. In this process, you will make mistakes and that is okay because there will always be someone there to help you learn from them so that you know what to do in the future.

What is your favorite thing about the school where you are currently placed?

The overall atmosphere in the school I am currently placed is very welcoming and diverse. Both the staff and students are warm and inviting, which helped me immediately fall in love with my placement. This is a school that is filled with pride and if I had the opportunity to do it all over again, I would choose the Heritage Eagles every time!

