



Capture the Core

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First Grade

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- ELA 2
- Math 3
- LS 4

Things to do in K through 2

- to Support Spring Testing

In March, grades 3 – 8 will once again be taking the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT). As a first grade teacher, how can you best support this effort? Here are six ideas!

1. Focus on your grade level standards, so when your students reach the assessment grades, they will be well prepared. We all know that while students are tested beginning in third grade they are being assessed on all they have learned up to that time .

2. Ask upper grade teachers what areas are difficult for their students and brainstorm ideas for ways you can



increase their skills in these areas prior to entering the testing grades.

3. Increase independent time on task so students have the ability to stay focused for extended periods of time.

4. Be cheerleaders! Have your students write “You Can Do It” and “Show Off Our School” notes or cards to give to upper grade students for encouragement. You

can also make banners and arrange a time to visit their classrooms prior to testing to offer encouragement.

5. Discuss the testing with your students so they know they will have the opportunity to show how smart they are when they get to those upper grades.

6. Remember your fellow teachers. Testing time can be very stressful. A kind word, note, or some chamomile tea would be very appreciated.

2014 Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT)

March 3 – 14, 2014

Shift Kits Designed for Illinois Educators

In order to be truly aligned with the Common Core State Standards, there are instructional shifts in English Language Arts and Literacy which are required of teachers.

The ELA Content Specialists, in partnership with ISBE, created Shift Kits to provide schools and districts resources aligned with each shift of instruction.

There is a total of nine Instructional Kits and one Administrator Kit.

Each kit contains:

- A guide
- Recommendations from the International Reading Association
- PowerPoint(s) including facilitator's guides and handouts
- A list of recommended journal articles and books

Each kit also includes a table of contents where additional tools such as videos, webinars, and websites, for that shift are provided.

Educators are encouraged to visit the site and sign up for the listserv to receive notifications of updates on the Shift Kits as well as additional ELA Resources.

Educators can access the Shift Kit website at <http://education.illinoisstate.edu/casei/ela/>



IRA Statement in Shift Kits

The International Reading Association set clear guidelines for early readers in grades K-2 regarding the Common Core State Standards. This document, which states the expectations for K-2 readers, can be found in each kit.

Foundational skills such as phonemic awareness, phonological awareness, and other early literacy skills are

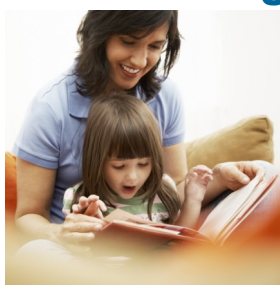
to be mastered in the early grades before other skills are to be expected. Please visit www.reading.org for more information.

An October 20th, 2013 blog defines a scope and sequence for early readers and can be found on [www.http://www.shanahanonliteracy.com/](http://www.shanahanonliteracy.com/) by searching kindergarten literacy.

“Imagination is more important than Information.”

Albert Einstein

Encourage Buddy Writing to Testing Friends



As noted on the Data and Assessment page, students in grades 3-8 will be undergoing ISAT testing throughout the state. This is a great time to

encourage writing by 1st graders to friends in older grades who might be testing. In order to meet the informational/explanatory standards, students could be encouraged to construct informational/explanatory pieces .

Brainstorming strategies like eating a good breakfast, getting a good nights rest, asking questions in class, and doing homework are great habits to

instill in first graders while having them practice the writing of encouraging notes.

The following link has ideas for setting up a first grade “how to” writing project and the steps to complete it. A writing rubric is also attached that is indicative of the first grade ability level and standards. Other foundational skills and literacy ideas can be found here too . <http://pvrsd.pioneervalley.k12.ma.us/>

Effectively Incorporate Technology in the Classroom

Today's students will continue to grow up in a rapidly evolving digital age. With this in mind, we need to expose our students to quality technology in a meaningful way to prepare them for the future. The new Illinois Learning Standards incorporating the Common Core specifically say students should be using technology to learn. Mathematical Practice Standard 5, **Use appropriate tools strategically**, says "When making mathematical models, (students) know that technology can enable them to visualize the results of varying assumptions, explore consequences, and

compare predictions with data.

The National Library of Virtual Manipulatives is free and has activities separated by grade level and Domains. <http://nlvm.usu.edu>

GeoGebra is free dynamic software that allows students and teachers to create and manipulate shapes and equations. It also has a large selection of free materials/videos already created for every grade level. <http://www.geogebra.org>

There are a variety of free online number lines to help

students. One example is <http://www.ictgames.com/numberLine.html>, which can also be used by a teacher on an interactive whiteboard.

<http://www.learningbox.com/base10/baseten.html> is a fun, interactive website dedicated to helping students learn numbers using base 10 blocks. This website can also be used on an interactive whiteboard.

Dreambox Learning offers a variety of free tools for teachers to use on their interactive whiteboards. <http://www.dreambox.com/teachertools>

Professional Development Opportunities

Save the Dates

ISBE and the Illinois Association of Regional Superintendents of Schools are hosting two **Summer Conferences** at the Springfield Convention Center on June 17th and 18th and at Pheasant Run in St. Charles, IL on June 11th and 12th. Save the dates to join teachers and other educators who are making

the new standards come alive in their classrooms and schools!

If you missed the **Illinois Institute for Mathematics Leaders** last year, have no fear, another institute is being hosted by ISBE. Save the date for June 16th and 17th in Springfield. There will be two concurrent institutes: K-5 and 6-12.

More information and registration is coming soon.

"Go down deep enough into anything and you will find mathematics."

Dean Schlicter

1st Grade Geometry

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction released sample tasks, which are available at <http://commoncoretasks.ncdpi.wikispaces.net/First+Grade+Tasks>.

One task has students look at a handout with shapes that are triangles, shapes that are very similar to triangles but do

not have all characteristics (such as it is not a closed figure) and some that look nothing like a triangle. The task then asks the students to circle all of the triangles.



did you know that those shapes were triangles?", points to a shape similar to a triangle and asks "Why is this shape not a triangle?" The students are working on 1.G.1 Distinguish between defining attributes (e.g., triangles are closed and three-sided) versus non-defining attributes (e.g., color, orientation, overall size); build and draw shapes to possess defining attributes. Once the student has finished circling shapes, the teacher asks "How



Dealing with Mid-Year Stress

Keeping Assessment in Perspective

During this time of year, teachers and students often start to feel low energy as well as an urgency in regard to annual assessments. Testing can offer valuable information, but may also cause concern, stress or fear. Teachers can help keep assessment in perspective by:

- **Maintaining a balanced approach to testing**
Annual testing is just *one* component of a balanced assessment strategy and should be considered in proportion with other assessment feedback.
- **Focusing on assessment's purpose**
Gaining a cumulative measure of student learning that highlights learning strengths and achievement gaps can help identify appropriate interventions and effective teaching strategies.
- **Sharing the "why" with students**
Share with students the purpose and benefits of assessment. Relieve student stress by letting them know how the information gathered will be used to promote their learning.
- **Building skills, not pressure**
Maintain focus on instruction based on learning standards and student *growth*, instead of just grades.

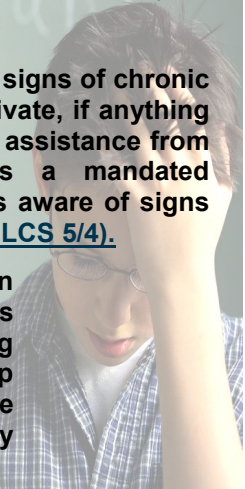
Chronic Stress

Too much stress can become counterproductive and prolonged stress can be disruptive to student learning. Studies have shown that exposure to this kind of chronic stress can produce negative academic (Duplechain, 2008) as well as mental, physical, and social impacts.

Children may experience multiple triggers of chronic stress both inside and outside of school, including divorcing parents, health issues, or bullying (Felitti, 1998).

If a student exhibits re-occurring signs of chronic stress, a teacher may ask, in private, if anything is upsetting him/her and request assistance from school support personnel. As a mandated reporter, a teacher who becomes aware of signs of abuse **MUST** report them (325 ILCS 5/4).

Dealing with stress is an important life skill that teachers can model powerfully. Learning how to deal with stress can help students and teachers persevere through challenges to ultimately improve student learning.



Making Connections

Social/Emotional Learning Goal 1:

"Develop self-awareness and self-management skills to achieve school and life success."

Danielson Framework:

- 1b. Demonstrating knowledge of students
- 2b. Establishing a culture for learning
- 3a. Communicating with students
- 4e. Growing and developing professionally

Conditions for Learning Indicators (Rising Star): CL 10 and CL 11

"The school culture promotes and supports the academic, physical, social, emotional, and behavioral skill development and engagement of students.(AND) ...the physical, social, emotional and behavioral health of all school personnel."

Teacher Self-Care

Teachers are also subject to stress, including secondary trauma as they "take on" the stress of their students. Fortunately, teachers can model resiliency, emotional self-monitoring, and strategies that benefit both teachers and students (Wolpow, 2011).

[Click here](#) for a student-friendly video about reducing stress. (Visit link at bottom of page for online newsletter.)



Signs and Strategies

If chronically stressed, students may:

- Have difficulty paying attention
- Be quiet, upset or withdrawn
- Show changes in performance
- Complain about being tired
- Increase aggressive behavior (OJJDP)

Ways to Reduce Stress at School:

- 1) **Create emotionally safe conditions for learning.**
Ex: recognize/discuss worries
- 2) **Model and practice stress reduction behaviors.**
Ex: peer-support, breathing exercises, physical activity, art
- 3) **Adapt physical environments.**
Ex: music, lighting, nature indoors, less stimulating walls

Related [Conditions for Learning Indicators](#) are included in the [Rising Star](#) on IIRC school improvement tool and accessible at [ISBE's Learning Supports](#) web site.

Duplechain, R., Reigner, R. & Packard, A. (2008). Striking Differences: The Impact of Moderate and High Trauma on Reading Achievement. *Reading Psychology*. 29, 117-136.

Felitti, V. et al (1998). Relationship of Childhood Abuse and Household Dysfunction to Leading Many Causes in Adults: The Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) Study. *American Journal of Preventative Medicine*. 14 (4).

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). Trauma-Informed Care For Children Exposed To Violence: Tips for Teachers.

Wolpow, R. et al (2011). *Compassionate Schools: The Heart of Teaching and Learning*. Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) Compassionate Schools.

[Click here](#) for this and archived editions of the *Capture the Core* newsletter.

