



# Missouri Association of Rural Education

*"20 years of Service to Missouri Rural Schools"*

Fall 2007

*Our goal is to work in cooperation with all other education organization, but our programs and effort will be designed to meet the specific needs of schools in rural Missouri.*

Please copy and share this newsletter with board members and other school staff.

Ray V. Patrick  
Executive Director  
201 South Holden Street  
Suite 202  
Warrensburg, MO 64093  
Phone (660) 747-8050  
Fax (660) 747-8160  
rpatrick@moare.com  
Website: [www.moare.com](http://www.moare.com)

## MARE 2007-2008 Calendar

March 6, 2008  
Board Meeting  
7:30 p.m.  
Resort at Port Arrowhead  
Lake Ozark, MO

March 7-8, 2008  
Annual MARE Conference  
Resort At Port Arrowhead  
Lake Ozark, MO

May 5, 2008  
Board Meeting \*\*  
10:00 a.m.  
Jefferson City, MO

\*\* Board Meetings to be held at the PSRS  
Building in Jefferson City.

## Executive Directors Report

Ray V. Patrick, EdD.

As this edition of the MARE newsletter is going to press, many of you have already had to deal with the "THE SNOW DAY." An early start to the Winter of 2007-2008 with parts of the state experiencing large snow falls and other parts with a massive ice storm. Dr. Randy Dewar, wrote an article for the newsletter several years ago on the eight common mistakes when dealing with weather related issues. The article concluded with three final thoughts for the rural superintendent:

- First, respect the decision of the parent who decides to keep a child at home because of winter weather. It is the parent's responsibility to do what they think is right to keep their child safe.
- Second, when in doubt, call off school. Err on the side of caution. There will be a better day to hold school.
- Then, plan to get to your office and be ready to take the calls. Snow-days or no snow-day, you are in for some free advice. Enjoy your exalted position!
- I would add a fourth thought – be prepared to deal with the major news media outlets. It seems that we are seeing more and more investigative reporters passing judgment on your districts decision making process.

MARE received outstanding recognition at the 99<sup>th</sup> annual National Rural Education (NREA) Convention held in Oklahoma City. First was the fact that three of the six 2007 Essay Contest winners came from rural school districts in Missouri. Included in this newsletter are copies of the student essays. Also found within is a brief outline for the 2008 Essay Contest contact information. I encourage your district to participate in this outstanding program. Second is the NREA Membership Development Award given to the Missouri Association for the 'Excellent Leadership in Rural Education Association Membership Development at the State and National Levels.' This award came about in recognition of the number of school administrators/districts in Missouri that have joined NREA through your MARE membership. The third outstanding recognition of the state association is Dr. Ray Patrick's (MARE Executive Director) election as *President-Elect Designate* of the National Rural Education Association. Dr. Patrick will serve on the NREA Executive Board and will assume the duties of President on January 1, 2010. This will be a great opportunity to bring recognition, at the national level, of the outstanding programs that rural schools in Missouri provide their students.

The conference committee has been working to put the finishing touches on the annual MARE conference scheduled for Friday and Saturday, March 7 and 8, 2008. Included in this newsletter is a registration form. Registration for the conference can also be completed by going to the MARE website – [www.moare.com](http://www.moare.com). Conference participation is open to anyone having interest in rural education. We would also encourage your district to consider placing into nomination one or more of the 2008 Outstanding Rural Education Awards. Deadline for the nomination packets must be postmarked by Friday, January 25,

*(Continued on page 2)*

**Missouri Association of Rural Education**

**Officers and Board of Directors**  
**2006-2007**

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- Vice President:    Geanine Bloch (Stoutland R-II)
- Secretary            Philip C. Dorth
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- Region D:            Geanine Bloch (Stoutland R-II)
- Region E:            James Williams (Delta C-7)
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- Region G:            (Vacant)
- Region H:            Larry Flanagan (Elsberry R-II)
- Region I:            John Brinkley (Linn Co. R-I)
- Region J:            Francis Moran (North Platte Co. R-I)

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- Kristi Smalley      (MO Distance Learning)

**Executive**

- Ray V. Patrick      Executive Director
- Philip Dorth         Associate Director

**BOE Training Schedule**  
2007-2008

January 10, 11, 12, 2008                      Bloomfield, MO

January 17, 18, 19, 2008                      Wellsville, MO

January 24, 25, 26, 2008                      Winston, MO

March 7 & 8, 2008                              Lake Ozark, MO

April 16, 17, 18, 2008                         Branson, MO

For details regarding these training places and dates—check MARE’s website. [www.moare.com](http://www.moare.com)

**Other Training Sites – Contact: Dr. Ray Patrick (660) 747-8050**

**Board Training Registration**

**Mail to:** MARE, 201 South Holden Street, Suite 202, Warrensburg, MO 64093  
**Fax:** (660) 747-8160

Name of Board Member: \_\_\_\_\_

Board Member Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Address (cont’d) \_\_\_\_\_

Board Member Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

School District: \_\_\_\_\_

Session Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Session Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*(Continued from page 1)*

2008.

In just a few weeks, the legislature will come back into session. This session looks to be a busy session as many of the legislators are facing term limits making this their last opportunity to get personal agenda legislation passed.

There have been several Interim Committee hearings held that will drive particular legislation. I would encourage you to stay in contact with your area legislators. They need to hear from not only you, but members of your board, your staff, and your community. There will be times during this session you will be called upon to make your legislator aware of you and your districts position. Please be prepared to respond.

As always, if those in the MARE office can be of assistance, please contact us by phone or email.

**Student Discipline Update:  
Recent Case Law Concerning What Constitutes a “Weapon”**

By: Joseph M. Wientge, Jr.  
Thomas A. Mickes  
Doster Mickes James Ullom Benson & Guest L.L.C.

A recent case out of the Missouri Court of Appeals, Southern District, has provided clarity for school districts concerning what instruments qualify as “Weapons” under board policy. Prior to this new ruling, uncertainty existed as to whether an instrument could be considered a “Weapon” if it was not explicitly set out in the board policy. This article will examine the potential problem area prior to the court decision and then discuss the impact of the new decision on school districts.

**The Problem with Air-Soft Guns: Can They Be Classified as “Weapons?”**

Most board policies, if not all, use language from Missouri Revised Statutes § 571.010 as the definition for “Weapon” in setting out discipline for the possession or use of a weapon. This statute sets out a number of instruments, such as blackjacks, concealable firearms, explosive weapons, and knives, to name a few, which are specifically considered “Weapons.” While the lists are not intended to be exhaustive, an issue has arisen as to whether dangerous imitations of these instruments also can be classified as a “Weapon.”

This issue has become pertinent for a number of school districts dealing with a rash of incidents involving air-soft guns. An air-soft gun is a plastic gun that shoots orange pellets through use of a spring mechanism. Air-soft guns are advertised as recreational toys, imitating guns; however, a number of retail stores require the buyer to be at least eighteen years old to purchase an air-soft gun. Additionally, depending on the type of air-soft gun purchased, these instruments can look almost identical to actual fire arms, including pistols, shotguns, and even assault rifles. While, all air-soft guns should have an orange ring around the barrel to demonstrate they are not actual weapons, many can be purchased without this safety precaution.

These air-soft guns became problematic as a number of districts had students attack other students with these instruments. When the districts moved to discipline the offenders, the issue would inevitably be raised as to whether air-soft guns were actually “Weapons” under district policy, and whether the students could be disciplined under such a policy.

**The Appleton Case Removes Ambiguity**

This issue was definitively resolved in the recent case Moore v. Appleton City R-II School District (“Appleton”). The facts of the Appleton case are similar to incidents occurring at other districts. In the Appleton case, Moore shot at another student with his air-soft gun, while driving by the district parking lot. Appleton investigated the incident and ultimately suspended Moore for one year for the possession and use of a weapon on district property, under Appleton’s weapon policy.

Moore appealed his suspension to the school board, the Circuit Court, and finally the Court of Appeals. At each stage, his argument was simply that the air-soft guns did not meet the definition for a “Weapon” under the board policy. The trial court denied this argument, stating the air-soft guns met the policy definition of a “dangerous instrument,” as the air-soft guns resembled firearms. In the trial court’s judgment, the present environment at schools of threats of gun-related violence meant that even the possession of instruments resembling weapons could create an extremely dangerous situation.

The Court of Appeals agreed with the trial court’s ruling and found that items that imitate or resemble weapons can be classified as “Weapons” under district policy. The Court of Appeals upheld the trial court’s decision and denied the student’s arguments to the contrary.

**What Does this Mean for Your District?**

The result of this recent decision is the elimination of ambiguity regarding a school district’s ability to discipline a student for use of any item that may imitate or resemble any of the instruments listed as “Weapons” or “Firearms” under Missouri Revised Statutes § 571.010. The law on this point is now clear and school districts may discipline students for using instruments that imitate “Weapons” or “Firearms,” even if there is no language in district policy speaking to the issue of imitations or replicas. Both courts considering this issue found the potential for school violence to be paramount in the decision to uphold Appleton’s suspension. Given the continuing stream of tragic stories of school violence, the Court of Appeals’ decision reflects an understanding that weapons and items imitating weapons have no place in a school environment, and create a dangerous atmosphere for everyone involved.

The best practice with regards specifically to imitations of weapons would be to amend the district’s policies to reflect the Appleton decision and put students and parents on notice that possession or use of any instrument or device replicating or imitating any dangerous instrument will be subject to the same discipline as if it were an actual weapon. Nonetheless, the Appleton decision affords districts the ability to discipline students for possession or use of imitation weapons, even if district policy does not explicitly state the district has such authority. By resolving the ambiguity regarding air-soft guns, the Appleton decision ultimately provides districts with additional discretion to ensure that students learn in the safest environment possible.

## NREA High School Essay Winners (Missouri Winners)

### Middle/Junior High School Winner “My Cool Rural School”

By Abigail Wheeler, Eighth Grade  
Adair County R-II, Brashear, Missouri

“Bee,” this is the sound of my alarm when I get up in the morning to go to school. There are many things I like about our school. Some of the things I like are the multitude of friends, the individual attention that you receive, and the extracurricular activities.

The first reason I like this school is because of the many friendships you take away from at our school everyone gets along, and everyone is friends. We all like and enjoy each others company and spending time together. It’s nice to have friends in other grades as well older and younger. I think this way because you have a wider variety of age groups and being friend with them all has its benefits.

A second reason I like our school is because of the individual attention I receive. Then I have a problem or need help understanding something, I can usually spend one on one time by myself or with another teacher. I consider myself a good group worker but when I need help with something its easier, and helps me learn more if I’m alone with the teacher.

A third and final advantage to being a small school is the extra curricular activities they offer. These activities include: basketball, softball, track, art club, and FBLA. I enjoy this because with having a little number of people who attend, you have a better chance to participate in these activities. Another thing I enjoy about the extra activities is being able to do it with your friends. When your on a team or in a club and everyone is friends, you tend to get along better and get things done.

A multitude of friends, individual attention, and extracurricular activities are only a few of the many reasons I enjoy being apart of a small rural school.

### High School Winner

### “My Rural School”

By Michelle Wright, 12th Grade  
Santa Fe High School, Alma, Missouri

I quickly dart in the large double red doors to escape the cold. The principal sees me while entering his office and greets me by name. I continue down the hall, pausing as I see some artwork on the wall. I can quickly pick out my younger sister’s and some other lower classmen’s by their style. I ditch my bag by my locker, greet some teachers standing in the corner of the hall, and then go sit with some friends at a cafeteria table. This is the goal of rural schools, the sense of family.

I love my classes. I walk to Chemistry II where, since there are only six of us, we do all kinds of cool experiments, like distilling Cherry Coke. Also the teacher is always doing research to answer questions we have. I go to pre-calculus where I am the only student in the class, so we can cover the topics quickly and even cover other things that interest me, like statistics. Last year in Business Technology III, there were only a couple of students so we designed computer jobs for the faculty and community. In English, we were able to eat traditional English Christmas food, and the teacher would proofread anything I had to write for any other class. I love my small classes because of the personal attention, depth of learning, and pace. I can achieve to satisfy my inquisitiveness.

After noon, I drive to a nearby town to attend college classes. This is one of the many opportunities I have been offered by my rural school. I have also been able to take an AP class and achieve a five on the test, take dual credit in my high school classes, and take online classes. I took physics and Spanish III through The Missouri Virtual School last year and gained a lot of experience using different technology. I will graduate from high school with 32 college credits that will transfer to a state university.

After college classes, I drive back to school for club activities and sporting events. Being involved in many things is just normal at a rural school. I have gained so many experiences from being so involved: how to do ballet from dance team, how to handle a camera from yearbook, how to run a concession stand from math club. The most important is that I have found a career and won several national trophies through FBLA. At a large school, I would have missed out on all but one of those.

I now leave my second home, my school, and my second family, my teachers. This spring I’ll graduate and head to a large state university. I’ll be okay because of the solid foundation of knowledge, experience, problem solving skills, and, most importantly, support that my rural school gave me. Faculty that knows everyone’s name, individual attention, in depth learning, college prep opportunities, many organizations, and teachers that really care characterize my school. It’s the perfect education, it’s my rural school.

**NREA High School Essay Runner-Up**  
**“How My Rural School Has Change in the Past 25 Years”**

By *Danica Jo McLain*, 11th Grade

North Harrison R-III, Eagleville, Missouri

When you grow up in a rural area, oftentimes your school becomes your second home. In such an environment, it is easy to forget how much a school changes. People focus on how much students have grown and relationships have changed, but without the growth of the school, student growth wouldn't be possible.

Twenty-five years ago, in 1982, the school was a completely different building. What is now our high school parking lot used to be the elementary wing. Our halls have been remodeled, our classrooms have changed, and the playground has moved. Curricula are getting stricter because college is being suggested more often as an option after graduation. With this new curriculum, there is substantial use of technology that students in 1982 wouldn't have even dreamt about.

There were computers twenty-five years ago, but the functions of them were limited. Internet use was not a necessity like it is today, and students did not have access to search engines, like Google and EbscoHost, where finding information literally takes seconds instead of hours. Visual display programs such as Photoshop and PowerPoint were not available, so creativity in school displays was limited. The yearbook staff had to print photos and design the pages by hand instead of electronically. Students did not take dual credit classes online or through ITV (Interactive Television) either. For me, it is difficult to imagine my class schedule without these tools because I am taking an online sociology class for college credit, and my Spanish class is over ITV.

Technology has changed drastically even in the past ten years. When I was in elementary, I recall using computer programs such as math games and Microsoft Word to develop skills for what was viewed as rapidly changing technology back then. Today, that seems preposterous since my school now has a computer lab with nineteen computers, a business room with another nineteen computers, three EMINTS rooms, a recently upgraded library with five computers, three rooms with Smart Boards (FACS, Algebra, and Business), and an ITV room that usually offers a full day's worth of classes.

As more advances are made in technology, it is an almost certainty that my school will change with it. Being open to experiences is important in everybody's lives, and if my school continues to be open-minded to change, then the students will be better off because of it. I believe that North Harrison takes pride in the addition of new technology because it pushes our students at an even younger age to learn new skills that will prepare them for a constantly changing world.

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**Guidelines for NREA 2008 Essay Contest**

Congratulations are in order to the three Missouri student winners in the 2007 Essay Contest. Copies of their essays are printed within this newsletter edition. Now is a good time to begin planning for the 2008 Essay Contest. First place and runner-up awards are given to Elementary students (grades 3-5), to Middle/Junior High students (grades 6-8), and Senior High students (grades 9-12). This essay contest is open to all students who attend a rural school. There is a monetary prize awarded to each of the winners.

***The NREA Writing Composition Rubrics and Format have been emailed to the district superintendent through the MARE Focus. The Rubrics may also be downloaded at the NREA website – [www.nrea.net](http://www.nrea.net) or the MARE website – [www.moare.com](http://www.moare.com). Entries must be postmarked by February 4, 2008.*** Winners will be announced April 1, 2008.



The Missouri Association of Rural Education (MARE) received the National Rural Education Association (NREA) *Membership Development Award* at this years NREA 99<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention held in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Dr. Bob Mooneyham, NREA Executive Director is pictured presenting the award to Dr. Ray Patrick, MARE Executive Director. This new award is presented to the state association exemplifying 'Excellent Leadership in Rural Education Association Membership Development' at the state and national levels.

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**Missouri Association of Rural Education  
201 South Holden Street, Suite 202  
Warrensburg, Missouri 64093**

**Outstanding Rural Education Awards**

The Missouri Association of Rural Education will present awards for outstanding performance in the area of rural education. Nine such awards will be given this year during the Annual MARE conference luncheon on March 8, 2008. Awards will be given in the following areas:

- *Outstanding Rural Elementary Teacher*
- *Outstanding Rural Jr. High/Middle School Teacher*
- *Outstanding Rural High School Teacher*
- *Outstanding Rural Building Administrator*
- *Outstanding Rural District Administrator*
- *Outstanding Rural Support Staff Member*
- *Outstanding Rural Board of Education*
- *Outstanding Rural School District*
- *Outstanding Rural Student (Junior or Senior)*

To submit a nomination for an award, please complete the nomination form for each nominee. Please supply additional information on school, business, or agency letterhead explaining why the individual or school district is being nominated. (Information provided may be used in the introduction of the award winner.) A maximum of three support letters may be included to validate the nomination. Please make three copies of all information requested and mail all materials in a single envelop marked "Award Nomination" to the MARE address listed above. All nominations and support material must be received in the MARE office on or before Monday, January 25, 2008 to be eligible.

*Nomination and letter of support may also be completed and submitted on the MARE website: [moare.com](http://moare.com).*

**MARE Award Nomination Form**

Name of Nominee: \_\_\_\_\_

Nomination Award Category. \_\_\_\_\_

Address of Nominee: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number of Nominee: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Person Submitting Nomination: \_\_\_\_\_

Title of Person Submitting Nomination: \_\_\_\_\_

Nominator's Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Nominator's Fax Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Nominator's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*Preliminary Conference Schedule*

**Annual Conference**

**“Rural Schools, Working Together to Make a Difference”**

**March 7 & 8, 2008**

**Thursday, March 6, 2008**

7:30 p.m. MARE Executive Board Meeting

**Friday, March 7, 2008**

8:00 a.m. Registration Opens

9:00 a.m. Welcome & Opening Remarks

***First General Session***—Legal Team

Door Prizes

11:45 a.m. Luncheon

1:00 p.m. Small Group Sessions (Presented by Associate Members)

2:00 p.m. Small Group Sessions (Presented by Associate Members)

3:00 p.m. ***Second General Session*** (Keynote Speaker)

4:15 p.m. Annual MARE Membership Business Meeting/Legislative Update

Door Prizes

5:30 p.m. Hospitality Room by Associate Members

Opening of Exhibit Area

**Saturday, March 8, 2008**

7:15 a.m. Registration Opens

Breakfast

8:30 a.m. Small Group Sessions

9:30 a.m. Small Group Sessions

10:00 a.m. Exhibits Open

11:00 a.m. ***Third General Session***

Door Prizes

12:30 p.m. Luncheon

Outstanding Rural Education Awards

(Meeting Adjournment)



MARE CONFERENCE REGISTRATION
MARCH 7 - 8, 2008
RESORT OF PORT ARROWHEAD - LAKE OZARK, MISSOURI

School or Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Purchase Order #: \_\_\_\_\_ County Code \_\_\_\_\_

Registration Fee: (No Registration Fee for Spouse/Associates/Guests/Board Trainees - Meal packages for Spouse/Associates/Guests/Board Trainees listed below) (Registration fee includes tickets for breakfast, luncheon, and banquet)

1st & 2nd registration from same school district (all meals included) # @ \$115. each = \_\_\_\_\_

3rd & additional registration from same school district (all meals included) # @\$100. each = \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse/Guest/Board Trainee Meal Package: # Individuals will be attending

Package A: All meal events - (Includes ticket for breakfast, luncheon, banquet)

# @ \$50. each = \_\_\_\_\_

Package B: Individual meal prices:

Friday Luncheon: # @ \$15. each = \_\_\_\_\_

Saturday Breakfast: # @ \$13. each = \_\_\_\_\_

Saturday Luncheon # @ \$22. each = \_\_\_\_\_

Total Amount Due: \_\_\_\_\_

Table with 3 columns: NAME, Type (Superintendent, Board Member, Board Member Trainee, Guest, Associate, Exhibitor), and If Attending Board Training. Includes multiple rows for registration entries.

Fax Registration and P.O. to (660) 747-8160

Or mail to:

MARE

210 South Holden, Suite 202

Warrensburg, Missouri 64093-3400

Refund Request/Cancellations must be received prior to February 25, 2008

NO refunds after that date because of fixed costs.



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Dr. Mark Ficken  
Superintendent of Schools  
Boonville R-I School District



Dr. Roger D. Adamson

*"When we ask Dr. Adamson for something, we know that the information he gives us will be timely, accurate, and in the District's best interests. We have confidence in Roger and appreciate the service he provides."*

Dr. James R. Haley  
Superintendent of Schools  
Oak Gove R-VI School District

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**ARE YOU A REAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER?**

- Do you ask guests if they have remembered their scarves and mittens as they leave your home?
  - Do you move your dinner partner's glass away from the edge of the table?
  - Do you ask if anyone needs to go to the bathroom as you enter a theater with a group of friends?
  - Do you hand a tissue to anyone who sneezes?
  - Do you refer to happy hour as "snack time"?
  - Do you say, "I like the way you did that!" to the mechanic who repairs your car to your satisfaction?
  - Do you ask, "Are you sure you did your best?" to the mechanic who fails to repair your car to your satisfaction?
  - Do you sing the "Alphabet Song" to yourself as you look up a number in the phone book?
  - Do you say everything twice? I mean, do you repeat everything?
  - Do you fold your spouse's fingers over the coins as you hand him/her money at a tollbooth?
- If you answered yes to four or more, it's in your soul—you are hooked on teaching. And if you're not a teacher, you missed your calling.
  - If you answered yes to seven or more, well, maybe it's TOO MUCH in your soul—you should probably think about retirement.
  - If you answered yes to all 10, forget it—you'll ALWAYS be a teacher, retired or not!

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**READING STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT ALL READERS**

by

Lorene Reid, Ph.D.

President of the Missouri Association of School Psychologists

On January 8, 2002, President George W. Bush signed into law the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. According to the U.S. Department of Education, there are four basic concepts that form the foundation of No Child Left Behind: (1) stronger accountability, (2) more freedom for states and communities to decide how to use Federal educational funds, (3) the use of scientifically based instructional programs, and (4) more choices for parents. As directed by NCLB, states must test children in grades 3 through 8 annually in reading and math. In this way, the states will be able to document their students' academic progress. One of the goals of this legislation is to provide quality instruction for all children in the United States so they will become proficient readers by the end of third grade.

In order to achieve this goal, teachers and school psychologists can collaborate to help all readers achieve success. As professionals, we must work with students to improve the five reading skills that are the focus of NCLB. These skills were identified in the Report of the National Reading Panel in 2001 as critical to early reading success. They include the following: (1) phonics, (2) phonemic awareness, (3) fluency, (4) comprehension, and (5) vocabulary development. By using reading strategies that address these skills, we can help students become successful readers.

**PHONICS**

Phonics includes knowledge of the letters of the alphabet and the relationship between the letters of written language and the sounds of spoken language. Schools psychologists, parents, and teachers know that it is important for young children to be able to recognize and name the letters of the alphabet, recognize beginning letters in familiar words, and relate letters to the specific sounds they represent. Activities that promote student success with phonics include the following: learning the letters of the alphabet and learning the consonant sounds, blends, digraphs, and long and short vowel sounds.

**PHONEMIC AWARENESS**

This includes the knowledge that words are made of the smallest units of sound called phonemes and that phonemes are associated with letters such as in segmenting and blending. Activities that promote phonemic awareness are learning about rhyming words and alliteration, studying word families, and using a Word Wall to help children interact with words in a meaningful way on a daily basis. Making words with plastic or paper letters and putting words into categories (word sorts) are also activities that promote phonemic awareness.

**FLUENCY**

This involves reading that "flows smoothly" and accurately from the reader's lips. Reading specialists agree that there are five components of fluency: reading rate, accuracy, fluidity, phrasing, and expressiveness. Consequently, fluency involves grouping words together to make phrases that make sense, exhibiting automaticity while reading, and reading with expression. Strategies that aid fluency include: choral reading, repeated readings with a tape recorder, listening to books on tape, Sustained Silent Reading, echo reading, and Readers' Theater.

Another activity that positively impacts reading fluency is the modeling done by the teacher during read-alouds. During reading-alouds, children hear how a good reader sounds and they observe examples of phrasing, proper intonation, and expressiveness.

**COMPREHENSION**

Comprehension involves making meaning from text and is the goal of all reading. Strategies that aid comprehension include the following: Anticipation Guides, graphic organizers such as KWL charts and webs, Reciprocal Questioning, Double-entry Journals, and Cloze Procedures. Anticipation Guides provide students with the opportunity to respond to a number of true/false statements about the topic they are going to explore in a particular reading selection. By reviewing their answers, the teacher can get an idea of the students' prior knowledge about the topic. Also, the Anticipation Guides help the students focus their attention on the text and give them a purpose for reading as they look for information related to the guide.

Reciprocal Questioning is another activity that focuses on comprehension. In this activity, the teacher and students read a section or a chapter of a text. Then, before the teacher has the opportunity to ask the students questions about the reading selection, the students ask the teacher questions. After the students ask their questions, the teacher is free to ask hers. This activity helps the students learn to formulate questions about a text and encourages higher order thinking. It also gives the students the opportunity

*(Continued on page 13)*

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to take ownership of their learning as they pursue questions that are of interest to them. They become more active participants in the discussion of the story since they initiate the questions first, rather than always responding to the teacher's questions. This activity motivates the students to concentrate more on their reading so they will have the information necessary to formulate questions to ask the teacher.

Double-entry journals are another way to motivate students to concentrate on making meaning from a text. In this type of journal, students draw a vertical line down the middle of each page and divide the page into two sections. In the section on the left, students copy sections of the text that they find interesting or thought-provoking. On the right hand side of the page, students record their ideas, impressions, and questions related to this segment of the text. In this way, students respond to a text in a personal, interactive manner. They are encouraged to read more and to make sense of the text because they are making a personal connection to it. When they share their journal entries in class discussions, the students can see how their ideas/questions are similar to or different from those of their classmates.

Cloze procedures are also effective means to promote reading comprehension. In a cloze procedure, students are asked to fill in the blanks with appropriate vocabulary. In this activity, the teacher has written a series of sentences about a given topic and she has omitted words from these sentences. She may choose to omit words in regular intervals (every 5<sup>th</sup> word) or to omit only "key" vocabulary words. This is a good way to introduce very young students or English Language Learners to note taking as well as a way to reinforce vocabulary for all students.

### **VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT**

Vocabulary might best be described as words that students need to know to communicate efficiently. Learning new vocabulary words is always a challenge, but this is especially true after second grade when students are exposed to social studies and science. Most social studies and science chapters contain ten or more new vocabulary words. In order to remember these words and to use them correctly, students need multiple opportunities to read the words, hear them, and use them in speech and in writing. Word Walls, Word Sorts, and Making Words are effective ways to learn vocabulary as well as to reinforce spelling and phonemic awareness. Cloze procedures are also a good way to assess vocabulary since they require students to fill in blanks with appropriate words in order to make sense of the sentence.

Constructing Definition Word Maps is another way to learn new words. These word maps provide a framework for organizing information about a new vocabulary word. Here students focus on three aspects of the new word: (1) the category to which it belongs, (2) the attributes of the concept, and (3) a few examples to illustrate the concept. This information is arranged in a graphic organizer with the new word in a circle in the middle of the organizer. The category, the attributes, and the examples all branch out from this circle and form a web around the new word.

The Magic Square is another activity that helps students add to their vocabulary knowledge base. In this activity, the student works with two columns of information: (1) vocabulary words that are listed as A, B, C, etc. and (2) definitions of the words that are arranged from 1 to 10. The student matches the correct word and definition and records the number of the definition that goes with each letter on the magic square. When the student has recorded all of the numbers in the correct letter-box of the Magic Square, the sum for each row across and each column down will be the same. This number/sum is the Magic Number. Most students will agree that this activity is a good way to review vocabulary before a test.

In conclusion, No Child Left Behind is the name given to Federal legislation that was passed by Congress in 2001. The name given to this legislation says it all. With the enactment of this legislation comes a challenge to provide quality reading instruction that will help every child become a successful reader. Through the use of reading strategies that address the five reading skills that are the focus of No Child Left Behind, teachers and school psychologists can work together to help their students become proficient readers.

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## MEMORY AND LEARNING

By Robin Martin, Ph.D., NCSP

I frequently hear teachers state that they have students with problems remembering information, so I decided to write a newsletter focused on memory. While memory disorders are not a classification under special education, such problems can seriously impact a student's ability to function to his or her ability level in the classroom. Therefore, determining what the problem is, helping the student understand his or her strengths and weaknesses, and learning to work around the weakness is very important. I will discuss memory from the information Processing theory of learning. I will also include information on which areas of the memory system are most impacted by certain disabilities. However, a student does not have to have a specific diagnosed disability to have difficulties in any area of memory.

Memory is a very complex neurological construct composed of several interactive parts. However, the three major portions of the system are Short Term Memory, Working Memory, and Long Term Memory (see attached drawing). Information comes into the system through the five senses. The sensory information is quickly evaluated by the brain for relevance to the current learning situation. If the information is relevant, it continues into short term memory. If it is unimportant at the time, the information fades and is not brought into consciousness. Students (and adults) with attention deficits may have problems at this point, as they can have difficulties "screening" out currently irrelevant information. Additionally, many persons with attention deficits do not process important information deeply enough for it to move into short term memory. So, they may miss important information (i.e., verbal instructions) and take in irrelevant input (i.e., the custodian cleaning in the hall).

Short term memory is very small and lasts for approximately 30 seconds. The average adult can hold 7 pieces of information in short term memory (the size of a phone number), while young children may only be able to hold 2 or 3. The amount that can be remembered increases as the child gets older. These 7 pieces of information can be more than 7 digits or numbers if strategies (such as chunking) are used. After about 30 seconds the information deteriorates, unless it undergoes additional processing or rehearsal. Information can move from short term memory into either long term memory or working memory.

Long term memory is where information is stored to keep over long periods of time. However, there is no one place in the brain that is the "memory section." Memories are stored all over the brain, although certain types of memories tend to be stored closer together, such as music, visual, or verbal memories. That is why a stroke victim may be unable to remember how to say a word in conversation, but can sing a song with no problem. It takes extended time in order to totally consolidate information into long term memory and the knowledge can be lost if there has only been one exposure to the concept. This is why students with seizures may require significant repetition of material in order to learn. Seizure disrupt short term memory and impact material that has not been fully consolidated into long term memory.

Information is stored in the brain through the creation of a connection between neurons in the brain. The more exposures to the information, the stronger the connection becomes and the easier it is to pull the information out of long term memory. This is also why "cram" studying is not effective. The information is introduced into memory long enough for the test and the material is not retained for an extended period of time (until mid-terms or finals!). Students may say "I knew it last night, but I couldn't remember it when I took the test." When retrieving information, the brain uses a process called "spreading activation" where it will also activate information closely connected to the material being "spreading activation" where it will also activate information closely connected to the material being retrieved. This makes the use of teaching strategies, such as graphic organizers or activation of previous knowledge prior to teaching new concepts, most effective. If the student activates what he or she already knows about a subject, it is easier to make connections between old and new knowledge and to ensure that if one part of a concept is retrieved the other portion will be connected. This also makes it important to use learning and memory strategies. If a mnemonic device or a visual or verbal cue can be attached to the information it can be retrieved more easily.

Working memory is the third portion of the memory system. It is part of the structure, where information is brought together from long term and short term memory and manipulated. For example, with a math problem a student would input the numbers given from short term memory and then draw on long term memory to decide the procedures needed to solve the problem and then maneuver the information to come up with a solution. When writing, even more information must be retrieved and manipulated. The student must retrieve information known about the topic, grammar and syntax rules, procedural knowledge on how to write a paragraph and graphomotor input on how to form the letters. The sentence is actually written as a "rough draft" in working memory prior to being written on the page. Therefore, writing requires a great deal of memory resources from several different parts of the brain. Students with attention deficits often have great difficulty with working memory. This could be for several reasons, including losing information constantly due to distractibility, an inability to process information deeply enough, or problems organizing information retrieved.

While memory consists of three interactive parts, each part can be broken down into two other sections, visual and verbal. Some people may have no problem consolidating or retrieving visual information, but have great difficulty with verbally loaded

tasks. This could manifest in writing as a story with simplistic content and repetitive wording, but with correct writing mechanics (e.g.; capitalization or punctuation).

In addition to visual and verbal memory, long term memory is filed in four main ways: 1) paired memory (for example, associations between words and their meanings); 2) procedural memory (how to do things such as drive a car); 3) categorical memory (factual/declarative memory); and 4) rules and patterns (for example, phonics rules or social behavior). There can be deficits in the ability to acquire or utilize information in any of these 4 areas.

The three part system is actually the simple, linear version of how your memory system works. Actually, all three portions are very intertwined. In the short-term memory section, extensive use is made of the information found in long-term memory to recognize objects or concepts. So, these areas are not really discrete and there is much overlap.

Memory deficits or “breakdowns” can be found at any point in the system. The problem can be with:

- processing information deeply enough to move it into short term memory
- movement of knowledge from short term to long term memory
- consolidation of material into long term memory over an extended time period
- retrieving information from long term memory
- organizing the information retrieved
- keeping information in working memory long enough to complete a task

Additionally, long term memory difficulties can include either consolidation or retrieval of specific types of information only, such as verbal or visual input. A person with visual retrieval problems may inconsistently remember how to write letters or numbers or how to spell a word. Verbal retrieval difficulties may manifest as a problem finding the correct words to use in conversation or in writing.

It is important to determine exactly where the breakdown occurs in order to select the best interventions for a student. Once the problem has been identified, it is imperative that the student is taught about his or her memory strengths and weaknesses (a process called demystification) and what types of strategies he or she can use to compensate. The teacher and the student should work together to make sure that the compensatory strategies are used and that they are effective. The most effective interventions for memory difficulties of any kind reduce the cognitive energy required by externalizing the memory process. Use graphic organizers, checklists, write down the procedures required for a task, planners, writing on computers, anything that will make the process visual and reduce the memory necessary to complete the task. I have included a copy of a very effective verbal mediation strategy for you to try. It is verbal, but it makes the information visual and it is good to use with students with any type of memory weakness or difficulties remembering the sequence required to complete a task (math procedures, writing, etc.). Other strategies that are useful in helping students with memory weaknesses include story webs, vocabulary webs, T-W-L-K knowledge maps, and venn diagrams. All of these allow a student to pull consolidating information out of long term memory, make it visual, and then connect in new learning. It also helps with consolidation information from short term to long term memory in a way that is usable at a later time, while decreasing the cognitive energy required to hold the information in working memory. You will recognize many of them as good reading or writing strategies.

It is ineffective to merely hand a strategy to a student and expect them to use it correctly. As you will remember, both short term memory and working memory are very small. Trying to remember all of the steps in any strategy requires a great deal of cognitive energy and research has shown that even adults will not use a new effective strategy if it is too much work at first. Think about when you first learned to drive— you had to remember every step and think carefully about everything. Now you don’t even think about how to drive. It became automatic to you and is part of procedural memory. Once it becomes procedural memory it takes only a small amount of cognitive energy to use the strategy. Additionally, most people do not know what situations are best for using which strategies. Therefore, teaching a new strategy is just like teaching any skill:

1. Direct teaching—teach the strategy to the student(s) and discuss when it would be useful
2. Provide examples—give the student(s) a visual list of the steps in the strategy
3. Model using the strategy
4. Have the student(s) use the strategy with supervision
5. Scaffold support, using only as much as required
6. Continue to remind student(s) when it would be appropriate to use certain strategies.
7. Eventually the strategy will become automatic and support will not be needed.
8. Expect the student(s) to use the strategy in your class at all appropriate times.

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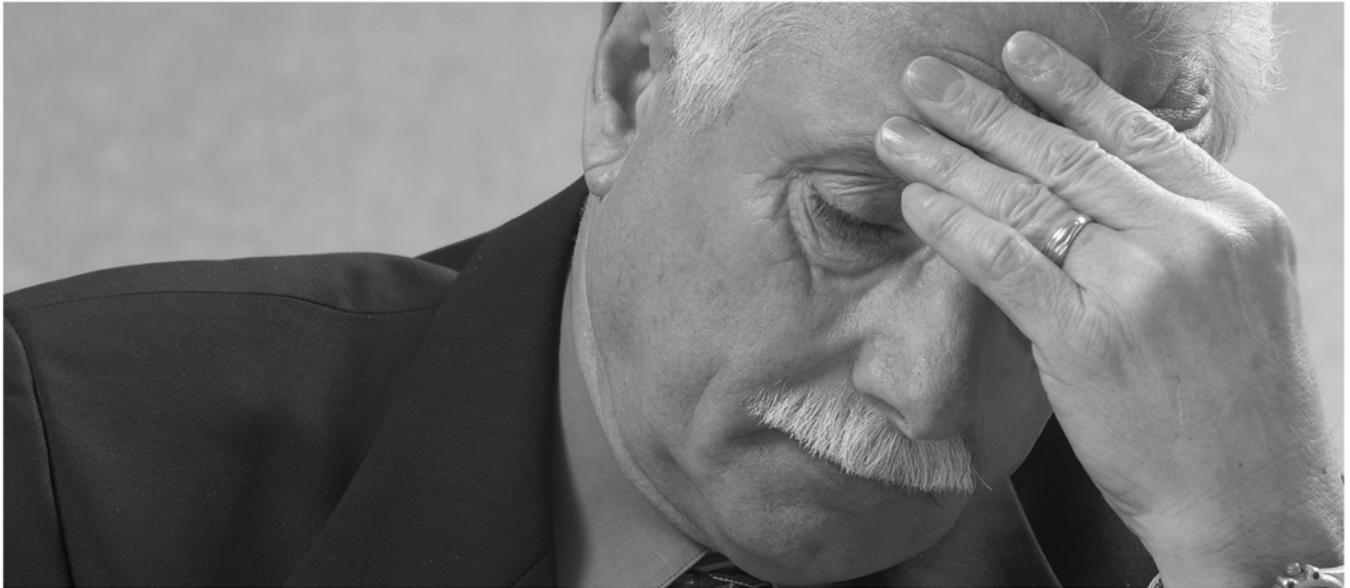


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