

# Dennis-Yarmouth RSD

## Instruction Office Newsletter



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### Easing Holiday Stress in the Classroom

With all the excitement and joy that the holidays can bring, they also usher in a set of particular challenges in the classroom. Your students may be experiencing:

- Disrupted routines at home and school.
- Stress from adults that they may feel but not fully understand.
- Sensory overload with the bombardment of commercialized holiday messages.
- Fatigue.
- Anxiety over expectations about gifts.
- Separation anxiety over leaving school for a long stretch.
- A disconnect with the classroom community if their own family traditions differ from the majority.
- The economic pressures of the holidays translating to particularly stressful conditions for their families.

In addition, of course, you yourself may be tired, stressed, nursing a cold and managing the many demands of this time of year.

Because of all of this, do anticipate over the next few weeks:

- Some regression in behaviors.
- For younger students, more frequent tantrums and tears.
- Homework and other struggles.
- Increased distraction.
- Headaches and other physical symptoms of stress or fatigue.
- Increased social tensions and conflicts.
- Less patience in adults (families, colleagues and yourself).

### Important Dates: 2015

- Professional Development  
January 16
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Day  
January 19
- Mentor Meeting  
January 26
- District Meeting (DDMs)  
January 28
- 100<sup>th</sup> Day of School (w/ no snow days)  
February 12
- District Meeting (State of the District)  
February 25
- Professional Development  
March 20
- Training for New Mentors  
March 28

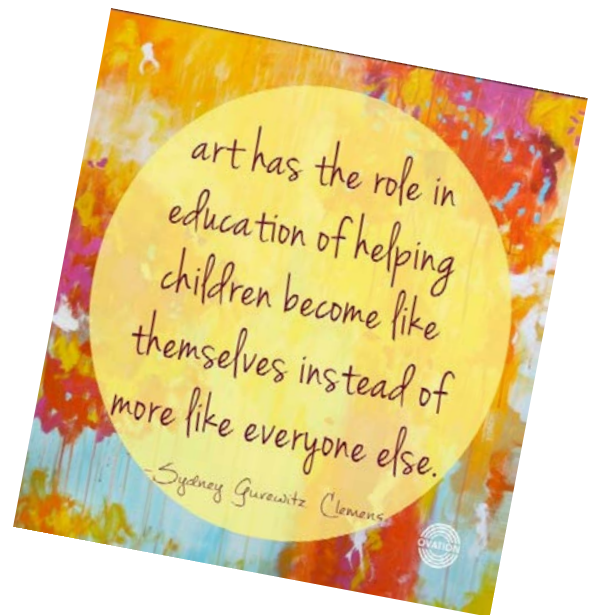


### So, what can you do?

First and foremost, take care of yourself. The more you attend to your needs, the better equipped you will be to take on additional classroom stresses in a calm and constructive way. In addition:

- Keep to the normal routines as much as possible. While classroom and school-wide celebrations are lovely and frequent at this time of year, don't underestimate the power of predictable and comfortable routines in helping kids to feel safe and settled.
- Plan for extra quiet times in the classroom: silent reading, read-alouds, quiet art activities with music in the background. These moments can help kids re-group, re-focus and provide a needed break in a busy day.
- On the other end of the spectrum, provide additional outlets for physical activity if you can: time to run outside, stretch breaks, simple yoga poses. For some kids a physical outlet helps to drain stress and re-focus energies.
- Minimize a focus on the material aspects of the holiday season. If kids want to engage in conversations about their wish lists and what they're "getting," acknowledge the excitement of that and gently move the conversation on.
- Minimize a focus on explicit holiday "projects," even if you plan to address a range of cultures and traditions. Unless these are attached to a meaningful part of the curriculum, holiday projects are often a superficial tour and focus kids' energies on the very things that may be making them feel anxious.
- This said your students might want to explore similarities and differences between the cultural and religious traditions of their families. Keep in mind that not all students will have particular traditions to share regarding this time of year (so conversations should be open enough for students to participate in many ways) and that no student should ever be asked to represent "a group." Rather, conversations should be framed around what "my family does."

- Normalize that the holidays can raise a range of feelings, not all of which are good feelings. For one example of how to do this check out this [lesson plan](#).
- Finally, be sure that kids understand the transition out of and back into school. Counting days on the calendar and talking about what will happen when kids get back to school may help ease uncertainty about the transition.



## Asking Students Text-Dependent Questions



“The types of questions that students are asked about a text influence how they read it,” say Douglas Fisher and Nancy Frey of San Diego State University in this helpful article in *Principal Leadership*. “If students are asked recall and recitation questions, they learn to read for that type of information. If they are asked synthesis questions, they learn to read for *that* type of information. Unfortunately, many of the questions that students are asked are about personal connections, which may not even require that they have read the text at all.

“For example, a teacher might ask students reading a chapter about the global water shortage, *Has your family made any changes to reduce water consumption?* An observer in this class might see a lively discussion and lots of student engagement – but how much actual reading and thinking was going on? “It is important that teachers know how to engage students beyond simply asking them to tell a personal story,” say Fisher and Frey. “The content itself can and should be used to engage.”



This is a key element in the Common Core language-arts standards: they challenge teachers to pose questions that require students to read the text carefully and produce evidence to support their responses, which builds a strong foundation of knowledge upon which to make personal connections. “The emphasis should be on using explicit and implicit information from the text to support reasoning,” say Fisher and Frey. They suggest seven types of text-dependent questions (not all of which need to be asked about an individual passage):



- **General understanding** – This type of question asks students to look for the gist of the text they have read.
- **Key details** – Asking students *who, what, where, when, why, or how*, including nuanced details. These questions should focus on important information in the text, not trivia.
- **Vocabulary** – Focusing on word definitions, using context or structure to figure out unfamiliar words, ideas or feelings evoked by key words, shades of meaning, word choice, figurative language, idioms, and confusing words or phrases.
- **Text structure** – Asking students to think about how the text is organized – for example, the use of character dialogue to propel action or the problem-and-solution structure.
- **Author’s purpose** – Asking whether the text intends to inform, entertain, persuade, or explain something, and whether the author has a particular bias and leaves out certain information.
- **Inferences** – Asking students how the parts of a text build to the overall point or effect. “This means that they must probe each argument in persuasive text, each idea in informational text, or each key detail in literary text,” say Fisher and Frey. “Importantly, inference questions require students to read the entire selection so that they know where the text is going and how they can reconsider key points in the text as contributing elements of the whole.”
- **Opinions, arguments, inter-textual connections** – These questions should come after students have read and reread the text and developed their understanding through other types of questions.

“Text-Dependent Questions” by Douglas Fisher and Nancy Frey in *Principal Leadership*, September 2012 (Vol. 13, #1, p. 70-73), [www.nassp.org/pl0912fisher](http://www.nassp.org/pl0912fisher); the authors can be reached at [dfisher@mail.sdsu.edu](mailto:dfisher@mail.sdsu.edu) and [nfrey@mail.sdsu.edu](mailto:nfrey@mail.sdsu.edu).

## Response to Intervention for Classroom Management

“Poor classroom management results in lost instructional time, feelings of inadequacy, and stress,” say Kristin Sayeski (University of Georgia) and Monica Brown (University of Nevada/Las Vegas) in this article in *Teaching Exceptional Children*. “In addition, special educators often have the responsibility of behavior change as a primary goal of instruction.” Sayeski and Brown believe RTI is an effective structure for addressing this challenge:

- Tier 1 – Preventive classroom management, including high teacher expectations, clearly communicated rules and norms, established routines and procedures, efficient use of classroom time, stimulating instruction with high levels of student engagement, and positive teacher-student rapport.
- Tier 2 – First-line interventions, including changes to academic instruction (tutoring, literacy lab, review supports), positive reinforcement system, token economy, behavior contracts, remedial intervention, contingency system (loss of privileges, time out, group contingency), home-school note system, and surface management techniques (see below).
- Tier 3 – Intensive, individualized interventions, including functional behavioral assessments, behavior intervention plan, self-monitoring strategies, daily student evaluation, social skills instruction, support groups (study skills, anger management, grief counseling), goal setting and monitoring, crisis management or safety plan, and functional assessment checklist for teachers.

Sayeski and Brown present a list of surface management techniques based on the work of Redl and Winemann (1952). These can be very helpful dealing with minor behavioral infractions:

- **Planned ignoring** – for example, pencil-tapping may stop when it’s not reinforced.
- **Signal interference** – ringing a wind chime or flicking the lights to cue students to change their behavior.
- **Proximity and touch** – moving closer to or lightly touching a student can be a reminder to refocus, refrain, and reengage.
- **Using students’ interests** – changing examples to reflect student interests can reel them back in, or asking, “Ben, what did you think of the story?”
- **Hypodermic affection** – A student who is having a bad day can reboot if the teacher shows kindness in a way that’s more than skin deep.
- **Using humor** – Being funny can defuse a power struggle.
- **Hurdle help** – Saying “Let’s look at the first problem together” or “Tell me where you are on this assignment” can shift the focus from behavior to instruction.
- **Interpretation** – A statement like “She did this in response to your action” can clarify the meaning of an event and help a student develop a more rational view of the situation.
- **Regrouping** – Moving students around in the classroom can help address unwanted behaviors: “I am moving you because the two of you are always talking” or “Today, we are switching partners in order to practice our new strategy.”
- **Restructuring** – Changing an activity that’s not going as planned.
- **Direct appeal** – A reminder of the rules will sometimes get students back on track.
- **Authoritative verboten** – A clear “No!” without lecturing, nagging, or rationale.
- **Limiting space and tools** – During modeling, it’s helpful if students have limited stuff within reach to distract them.
- **Antiseptic bouncing** – Sending an off-task student out of the room on a neutral errand.
- **Permission** – Deciding not to make a big deal of an unwanted behavior, which may end up extinguishing it.
- **Promises and rewards** – These are best delivered randomly or at unexpected times. Sayeski and Brown advise against the overuse of extrinsic rewards.

“Developing a Classroom Management Plan Using a Tiered Approach” by Kristin Sayeski and Monica Brown in *Teaching Exceptional Children*, November/December 2014 (Vol. 47, #2, p. 119-127), <http://bit.ly/1w5vVje>; Sayeski can be reached at [ksayeski@uga.edu](mailto:ksayeski@uga.edu).

## Cape Cod Regional STEM Network

**Bring your best!**

### A Math Swap and Share Event Hosted by the Cape Cod Regional STEM Network!

In the spirit of holiday sharing, we invite  
**ALL K-14 mathematics teachers** to the  
**Bring your Best!**

**A Math Swap and Share Event on  
Thursday, December 11  
from 4pm to 6pm.**

This event, focusing on the *M* in STEM education, will be held in the Lorusso Tech Solarium at Cape Cod Community College. Free parking is available in Lots 9 and 10.

Teachers are invited to bring a math lesson, strategy, unit, rubric, or any math teaching or learning support that they would like to swap and share with others. The goal of the event is to share some best practices with other K-14 math teachers and help support each other as we engage in teaching the Common Core and prepare for PARCC! **Like a traditional holiday cookie swap, please bring extra copies and be prepared to tell others about your “secret ingredients”!**

Refreshments will be served, but of course, homemade cookies are certainly encouraged as well!



**Please forward along to other math teachers, and please RSVP so we can plan ahead. We are looking from representation across grade levels!**

Looking forward to celebrating the holiday season with some mathematics!

RSVP to Jill Neumayer-DePiper at  
jneumayer@cpaecod.edu

## Coaches Corner by B. Pontius & K. Brown

### Solving Contextual Problems

Students are solving more and more complex real world problems. The language in these problems can often pose difficulties for students. Having students identify key words without understanding the context can lead to choosing the incorrect operation. Using key words as a strategy can be misleading, as in this example.

*Maxine took the 28 stickers she no longer wanted and gave them to Zandra. Now Maxine as 73 stickers **left**. How many stickers did Maxine have to begin with?*

Another misleading example is the word "**of**". *This is often taught to mean multiply but it can also mean divide: 7/8 gallon container, how many cups **of** punch can he make? 1 cup = 1/16 gallon.*

As students expand their number system knowledge beyond whole numbers many of these words will be misinterpreted: *each, altogether, probably, total, alike, every other, change, end to end, round trip, day, etc.* Are there others that students struggle with in your math lessons?

Students need to think and improve their analysis of the structure and make sense of the problems; work first with one-step problems then multi-step problems. Mathematics is about reasoning and making sense of real world contexts. Helping students develop a sense making strategy will always work.

### References:

Van de Walle, J.A, Lovin, L.H. (2006). *Teaching student-centered mathematics grade 3-5* (pg 67-71) Boston, Pearson.

Buschman, L.E, (2005) Isn't That Interesting. *Teaching Children Mathematics* 12(1) pages 34-40.

Karp, K.K., Bush, S.B. @ Dougherty, B.J. (2014) 13 Rules That Expire. *Teaching Children Mathematics* 21(1) pages 18-25.

