

FEBRUARY 2022

THE SHARE

Demonstrated Success Newsletter



Empowering Educators to Improve Student Learning

We love helping you make a difference

MIKE SCHWARTZ

The past two year have been challenging—the combined impact of the pandemic, the ever-growing influence of social media, and increased isolation have magnified the stresses we all face. Even before the pandemic, the efforts to educate our future generation were challenging, as schools work to meet the increasing needs of students, educators, and families. So, this issue is focused on care: 4 tips for self care, a school's implementation of MTSS to meet the needs of all students, and a teacher cultivating caring students through critical inquiry. Please also check out our new website that offers useful support through our webinars, blog posts, and free videos on our YouTube channel.



DS offerings

Check out our
new website!

[WWW.DEMONSTRATED
SUCCESS.COM](http://WWW.DEMONSTRATEDSUCCESS.COM)

Read one of our
latest learning blogs

NO MORE
HIGHLIGHTERS!
4 WAYS
STUDENTS CAN
ANNOTATE BETTER

Register for free
March 14 webinar

UNDERSTANDING
MULTI-TIERED SYSTEMS
OF SUPPORT

Watch our recent
SEL Panel
Discussion

HEAR OUR EXPERTS





"Self care is giving the world the best of you.
Instead of what's left of you."

KATIE REED

Self-care tips for busy educators

LAUREN MERCIER, M.ED

Breathe

Focusing on your breathing is one of the quickest, easiest ways to reduce your stress.

- Place both hands on your chest and feel their comforting weight. This alone can be calming.
- For 3-10 breaths, breathe in for a count of 5 and out for count of 10. By extending your exhale, you are telling your heart to slow down.
- Tip: Lots of phones & watches have great breath-work apps that can help support your practice.

Check in with yourself

We are often too busy to be present with ourselves and realize how we're feeling. Take a few moments to reconnect with your body and feelings.

- Close your eyes and mentally scan your body, noticing how it feels. What does your body need? (Some water? Something to eat? The bathroom? A relaxing of your shoulders? Some sleep?)
- Now pay attention to your emotions. What word best describes how you feel? Just naming your emotions can help you take a step back from them.

Take your meetings on the move

Making time to get some fresh air and sunshine can feel challenging during a busy day. But the effort is worthwhile because moving your body and getting some spf-protected sunshine can help elevate your mood, boost your energy, promote creative thinking, and help you sleep better. Here's a way to fit in some outdoor time and be productive:

- Encourage your team to meet/plan while taking a walk.
- Tip: Put your pre-set agenda on your smart phone and take notes via voice-to-text.

Unplug

Educators have demanding, stressful days. For well-being, it's important to establish healthy boundaries around work-related technology—email, Google classroom, interactive platforms. Here are a few ways you can put some technology boundaries in place:

- Turn off your work notifications on your cell phone.
- Create no technology times (e.g., between 6pm and 6am or on Saturdays or Sundays)



Spotlight: MTSS: It Takes a Village, or for Antrim Elementary, a Community

TAMMY HILTON, M.ED

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support, often referred to as “MTSS,” is a hot buzz word in the world of education, but not a new concept. MTSS is an umbrella term that encompasses all the programs and services schools offer to support students for both enrichment and remediation in their academics, behavior, and social-emotional learning. It is challenging and time-consuming but ultimately a useful framework that requires structural change within a school system that goes well beyond RTI (Response to Intervention). In fact, RTI is only a small component of what MTSS is truly about. MTSS doesn't have to be expensive; it doesn't require fancy technology, pricey data collection programs, or the hiring of a multitude of specialists. One small school community in Antrim, NH is proving just that.

Robin Gregg, school counselor at Antrim Elementary School, has seen the MTSS process since its inception fifteen years ago in the Antrim school community. It began with the idea of PBIS (positive behavior intervention systems), which the staff felt was a great way to support students' social-emotional needs. As any initiative in education, Robin saw the idea “ebb and flow” with the introduction of new initiatives, budget constraints, and staffing changes. Over the years, the staff has also worked with different consultants around MTSS and changes in focus, ranging from Universal Tier One supports and strategies to the CASEL framework (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning) and the SWIFT initiative (Schoolwide Integrated Framework for Transformation). What never changed was the Antrim Elementary school staff and community wanting to do what was best for their students by looking at the whole child through the MTSS lens.

(Continued on page 5)



MTSS at Antrim cont'd

Presently, Antrim Elementary has an MTSS framework in place with structure and support for students at three different levels: Tier One, Tier Two, and Tier Three. Gregg credits the revitalization of MTSS to the leadership of principal Stephanie Syre-Hager, who arrived at Antrim Elementary a few years ago with a belief in a strong “systematic approach with fidelity” to Tier One with Lev Vygotsky's Zones of Proximal Development in mind for all students. Once that system was in place, Tier Two began to take shape. Currently, there are eight groups of students receiving Tier Two support that meet in a twenty-five minute period led by a staff member. Antrim Elementary believes that MTSS is an “all hands on deck” endeavor, so Tier Two groups are led by “specials teachers” (gym, music, art, etc.), special education, administration, and guidance. These students are identified by screeners and non-normed pre/post assessments, as well as teacher recommendations. Tier Three staff members include the school nurse, district social workers, administration, school counselor, and psychologists, as well as community support such as DCYF (Division for Children, Youth, and Families) and Wrap-Around. When needed, families are brought in to work with the school and these community resource programs, in an effort to support the child holistically. This is something that is really important in such a small school. Antrim Elementary is one of 8 elementary schools in the Conval district serving 150 students.

When asked what advice Robin Gregg would give to schools who find themselves in the beginning stages of MTSS like Antrim did fifteen years ago, she said, “Look at the school, the community, and the students and do things that are developmentally appropriate. Be brave, courageous, and learn to live with discomfort. There are wonderful, exciting opportunities for growth. Trust in the process. Believe that all kids can grow and learn. And remember, if students are struggling, it is not their fault; the fault is in the system.” For helping all students grow and learn, MTSS is a framework worth investing in.

Meet some of our new team members



Lauren is a well-rounded educator with K-12 experience as a classroom teacher, school counselor, and administrator. Her work is guided by the belief that all students can succeed. Lauren brings to DS experience and expertise in the area of social and emotional learning and development. She appreciates the positive, healthy work environment at DS and the enthusiasm and creativity of her colleagues. And she enjoys the opportunity to work with educators who want to learn new ideas or skills to better themselves personally and professionally.

Rebecca spent 17 years in the classroom, first as a high school English teacher and then as a writing instructor at UNH. She has a master's in writing and has worked as a writing coach and editor. She is also a trained facilitator and coach and has experience helping organizations shape their message and function efficiently and effectively. Rebecca enjoys problem solving, making things run better, and continuing to learn. She values the mission of DS and enjoys the dedicated, good people at DS, who are passionate about supporting educators.



What we're reading . . .

Black Ants & Buddhists: Think Critically and Teach Differently in the Primary Grades by Mary Cowhey

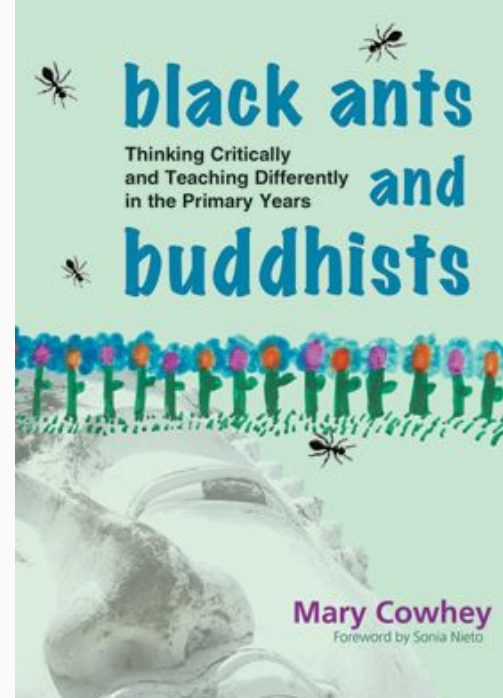
REBECCA DAWSON WEBB

Elementary educator and peace activist Mary Cowhey invites educators to envision a curriculum shaped not by test prep but the desire to make the world a better place. In her book *Black Ants and Buddhists: Think Critically and Teach Differently in the Primary Grades* (Stenhouse publisher, 2005), Cowhey shares her own story and makes the case for cultivating a classroom of care, where differences are celebrated and understanding and critical thinking nurtured.

The book opens with an anecdote about the appearance, in her second-grade classroom, of some harmless black ants, which some of her students look to kill. This small ant-event leads her students to a much bigger exploration of different religious and cultural attitudes about respecting all life and the question of personal responsibility in contributing to a more peaceful world. The anecdote not only explains the book's title but also illustrates the centrality of critical thinking and social justice in Cowhey's classroom.

Cowhey demonstrates how she uses language and literacy to help her students make textual connections and also to invite them into philosophical discussions and learning about the world. Conflict, she notes, is often avoided in classroom content, when in fact, it is an opportunity for rich critical thinking, discussion, and learning. "As a teacher of critical thinkers," Cowhey writes, "part of my job is to deliberately nurture sustained interest in questions over time. I want these children to grow into critically thinking citizens, not passive consumers of mass media fed by spin doctors."

In her approach, Cowhey is inspired by Brazilian educator and philosopher Paulo Freire, who argued against the "banking concept" of education which treats students as empty receptacles needing to be filled with learning, in favor of a "problem-posing" approach to education in which—together—students and teacher investigate problems, like the killing of ants, that organically present themselves. In *Black Ants and Buddhists*, Cowhey illustrates what a rigorous, engaged, and empowering social justice-oriented classroom looks like. In the process, she makes the case that elementary students should be taken seriously as critical thinkers able to grapple with real-world problems as they prepare to become participatory citizens who can contribute to making the world a better place.



**"I want my Students to pursue questions
that don't have easy answers."**

MARY COWHEY

