

November Staff Dev. Newsletter

— A NEWSLETTER FOR THE SEWARD STAFF BY DR. DOMINY —

A NOTE FROM MATT

As October comes to a close, I have found myself reflecting on all of the great things that happened in October. In early October, we had our external review. This process, while burdensome to prepare, is a great way to get honest feedback from people who fully understand education. We are blessed to have our review by practitioners who live education each day and recognize all the great things that are happening in Seward Public Schools. The feedback this team gave us will be used by the district strategic planning team to help make our strategies of the future.

On our October staff development day, we dove into the social studies and art curriculum reviews. I am excited that these teams chose to look at a new format for our curriculum documents- a story board format. We feel like this will be the best tool to communicate to new teachers of the future, our school board, and our parents.

October has also been a tremendous month for student activities- so many great examples of grit, determination, teamwork, etc. Thank you to all of you who lead our student activities.

JON GORDON- ONE TEAM BUILDING WITH HOPE

They say hope is not a strategy.
I disagree.

Hope in the future gives you power in the present to take one more step today. This week, I saw a family in Mexico have their hopes and dreams realized as a group of volunteers took steps to build their new home.

Their current home consisted of one room the size of a small office with one bed, a fridge, oven, no bathroom, and no running water for a family of four. Four people slept in one bed. I was invited by Sean and Janet Lambert, the founders of [Homes of Hope](#), to speak to all their volunteers who consist of many business leaders, their families and teams. Businesses and family's partner with Homes of Hope to build a home (they've built over 8000 around the world) and while I was there speaking, many of the business leaders told me it was the most powerful team building initiative they've ever done.

I decided I couldn't just talk the talk; I had to walk the walk and join them in building a home. You may think I'm handy because I wrote [The Carpenter](#) but actually, I'm one of the least handy people on the planet. But I had hope I could contribute and so I put on a tool belt, grabbed a hammer and volunteered.

As a student and teacher of people and team dynamics, I watched and experienced CEO's of companies, employees, spouses, kids, and Mexican Homes of Hope builders, all work together alongside the family to build their home.

Within minutes, I watched as titles, job status, corporate hierarchy, economic backgrounds and past accomplishments dissolved into one hope, one mission and everyone became an equal member of the team.

If someone needed help carrying sheet rock, you carried it with them. If someone needed nails hammered, you hammered. If someone needed sheet rock to be painted, you painted. And if the man whose house you were building needed help, you helped him.

There was a moment that will be etched in my memory forever. I could see the look in his eyes. This man was on a ladder, proudly building the new home his family would be moving into. It was the home they hoped for and now he was building the reality. He needed some nails and so I grabbed a handful and handed them one at a time to him as he hammered the sheet rock into the studs near the ceiling.

Each time he looked down at me and opened his hand I gave him a nail. In that moment I was his helper. Me dissolved into WE. I came there as a volunteer to help him fund and build his house, but now he was helping me become a better teammate. It was a moment of connection and oneness.

That's what building a home with hope does. It brings people together. It creates connection. It creates oneness. And that's why it's such a powerful team building experience.

The same goes for your business, school, hospital, church or organization. When you become ONE team and lose your egos and status and past accomplishments, you become a powerful team that creates a future filled with hope.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND RIGOR

1. Classroom Rigor and Artificial Intelligence

In this online article, Eric Hudson says that during a recent workshop he gave on how students can use artificial intelligence to help them think, he was asked this question: If

students need to struggle in order to learn, why would we encourage them to use artificial intelligence?

“I love this question,” says Hudson. “It gets to the heart of what causes learning.” What the question reveals is a common belief about rigor: that if we want students to learn, we need

to get them doing things that are hard. Rigor is also associated with students’ output: pages read, courses taken, levels completed. “At its worst, rigor is difficulty without purpose,” says Hudson, “more about assessing what students can endure rather than what they have learned.. Designing learning experiences for challenge is different than simply making things hard.”

What’s more important, he believes, are the inputs teachers design – meaningful tasks aligned to students’ prior knowledge and responsive to students’ values, culture, and identity – and the process involved in having students learn those tasks – scaffolding, differentiation, feedback – so students feel challenged and supported. “Outputs,” says Hudson, “are simply how we assess how well students used the inputs to navigate the learning process.”

More important than rigor, he continues, is students learning in their “zone of proximal development” (Vygotsky) and experiencing “flow” (Csikszentmihalyi): “Students learn,” says Hudson, “when they take on challenging tasks that are emotionally satisfying and involve the guidance of a skilled partner like a teacher, tutor, or peer.” The sweet spot of learning lies between boredom on one hand and confusion and anxiety on the other.

The human brain can only handle so much at a time and will stop processing when it’s overloaded. But students will work hard if they trust the teacher, value the task, and are motivated to try something new and hard because they have a sense of belonging, relevance, and confidence that they will succeed. “The complexity of teaching,” says Hudson, “is guiding students to the right places in the learning process where they can focus their precious cognitive and emotional energy on the tasks that will increase knowledge and competence.” Can artificial intelligence help with this kind of learning? Hudson believes AI can support good work at every level of Bloom’s taxonomy:

- Remember – Helping a student memorize vocabulary or formulas by presenting them in a variety of formats;
- Understand – Helping students process information by organizing and explaining it in different ways;
- Apply – Modeling a potential way to solve a problem that allows the student to create their own solution and compare it to AI’s;
- Analyze – Reviewing students’ work and asking follow-up questions;
- Evaluate – Generating alternative arguments or perspectives for critique;
- Create – Offering feedback and elaboration on students’ new ideas.

Initial research indicates that AI is especially effective at accelerating improvement among lower-performing students. Why? “Perhaps using AI knocks down some of the cognitive and emotional barriers that hold these performers back from learning deeply,” says Hudson.

“Perhaps it offers assistance not previously accessible to them (like human tutors). Perhaps it smooths out the simpler or less-important parts of the process to ensure they’re fresh for complex tasks.”

“Back to School with AI. Part 4: AI and the Question of Rigor” by Eric Hudson on his website.

MTSS



Classroom Interventions: What ...

www.hankbohanon.net

In this blog, we share classwide strategies that can increase the chance students will be successful based on the purpose of their behavior.

PATRIOTIC HOLIDAYS

Nebraska Revised Statute 79-724 requires the following:

Appropriate patriotic exercises suitable to the occasion shall be held under the direction of the superintendent in every public, private, denominational, and parochial school on George Washington's birthday, Abraham Lincoln's birthday, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday, **Native American Heritage Day**, Constitution Day, Memorial Day, **Veterans Day**, and **Thanksgiving Day**, or on the day or week preceding or following such holiday, if the school is in session.

Native American Heritage Day is Friday, November 24th

Veterans Day is Saturday, November 11th

Thanksgiving Day is Thursday, November 23rd