

September Staff Dev. Newsletter

September 1st, 2025

A message from Matt

At Seward Public Schools, every teacher is here for a reason. You were selected because we believed you could make us better—not just as a district, but as a community of learners and leaders. Your unique talents, passion, and commitment to students strengthen who we are.

What makes you thrive here is the mindset you carry with you each day. You believe in learning, in growth, and in giving your best for students. That drive to continually improve, to reflect, and to take on challenges is what makes our school system strong. It is what sets you apart.

As a district, we hold ourselves to a standard of excellence in everything we do. But excellence is not achieved alone—it is built together, through trust, collaboration, and support. Please know that you are not walking this path on your own. If there is ever anything I can do to support you, whether it is providing resources, guidance, or simply encouragement, I want you to reach out.

Thank you for giving your best every day. Together, we are shaping a brighter future for our students and for Seward Public Schools. Congratulations to Mrs. Goracke for earning the Golden Apple Award and modeling a career of the growth mindset and a life of service.



Congratulations to Laura Goracke, a science teacher at Seward High School! She's the Golden Apple winner for August. Turn in Wednesday at 10pm for our Golden Apple surprise on 10/11.

Jon Gordon- The Best Way to be the Most Powerful You

A friend asked me if I could share one lesson I learned while speaking to a bunch of college and pro teams during Training Camp last week, what would it be?

I really had to think about this because when you are spending time with incredible leaders there is going to be some serious wisdom shared.

As I reflected and made notes about each visit and each conversation I had with each coach and what I observed (I'm a student and teacher of leadership) I realized there is a common theme, lesson and characteristic they all shared.

They are all very authentic and because they are so authentic they are powerful!

Kevin O'Connell, the head coach of the Minnesota Vikings told me when he took the job he said, "All I can be is me because that's all I know how to be."

This might not seem revolutionary at first glance yet so many leaders struggle because they aren't authentic. They try to be like the leader they worked for or try to be what they think a leader should be or what others expect them to be.

Kevin didn't try to be Sean McVay who he worked for at the LA Rams. He decided to be himself and his Vikings culture was one of the best I've ever experienced.

Every place I visited you could feel the authentic power of the leader.

Whether it was Dabo being Dabo, Dave Canales sharing relentless optimism, Trent Dilfer pouring his heart and soul into his players and turning pain into his greater purpose, there was a spirit and energy so strong I didn't want to leave.

I joined Matt Rhule, the head coach of Nebraska for his new podcast. Yes, he started a new podcast (I believe other coaches will follow his lead) as he boldly builds Nebraska football into a contender once again. He's the most himself he's ever been and he's the most powerful he's ever been. Which is saying a lot because he has built numerous successful programs.

Liam Coen, the new head coach of the Jacksonville Jaguars even has **authentic** as one of his core values because he realized it was one of the key ingredients to his success and rise as a leader and coach. He and his GM want their players to be the real and best version of themselves.

When you are the most authentically you, you are the most powerful you.

Replicas are cheap.

Originals are priceless.

Fake is weak.

Real is powerful.

You don't have to be like anyone else. You are enough. You being you is what people want and will connect to the most.

In a world that wants you to be like everyone else when you decide to be your real, unique self others will gravitate to you, connect with you, and want to be lead by you.

Lead Positive,
Jon

Marzano on Student Engagement

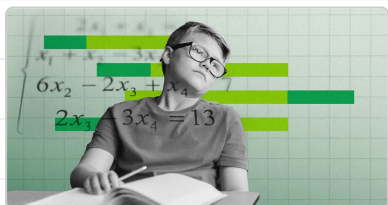
In *The New Art and Science of Teaching*, Marzano emphasizes that **engagement is not just about keeping students busy—it's about ensuring they are emotionally and cognitively invested in learning**. He argues that true engagement combines attention, commitment, and enthusiasm for learning tasks.

Marzano identifies **three main areas teachers must intentionally design for engagement**:

1. **Positive Student Emotions** – Students are more likely to engage when they feel safe, respected, and valued. Teachers foster this by building strong relationships, using positive interactions, and creating a supportive classroom climate.
2. **Student Interest and Relevance** – Engagement grows when students see personal meaning in what they are learning. Strategies include connecting lessons to real-life applications, student choice, and opportunities for creativity.
3. **Student Effort and Perseverance** – Teachers can help students sustain engagement by setting clear goals, scaffolding appropriately, providing feedback, and encouraging persistence through challenges.

Marzano also highlights that **engagement is linked to empowerment**: students need to feel that their voice and effort make a difference in their learning. Classroom practices like collaborative learning, self-assessment, and student-led discussions promote this empowerment.

Ultimately, Marzano stresses that **engagement is a deliberate design choice**—teachers must plan for it, monitor it, and adjust strategies to keep students actively involved in meaningful learning.



K-12 Schools Struggle to Engage Gen Z Students

Fewer than two in 10 Gen Z K-12 students strongly agree that their classwork feels important, interesting, challenging or aligned with their talents.

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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.

Constitution Day is September 17th, 2025



Seward Public Schools