



Catch up on the latest from ESU 17!

Notes From the Administrator

Is Technology Really Innovative?

Many schools have a school improvement goal that involves preparing students for the future, but is that really what is happening? Are we preparing students for the future or simply using the newest technology to do what we have always done?

When people hear the word innovation being used in education, they often equate it with the use of the newest technology or the latest teaching practices, but if those things are being used in the same way as a workbook page, is that really innovation? According to the book *The Innovator's Mindset*, whether or not using technology is innovation depends upon how the technology is being used. Are today's students more likely to need to write a blog or write an essay in their lifetime? Will today's students need excellent keyboarding skills or will speech to text software take the place of the keyboard? How important is neat handwriting and do we spend the time on penmanship that we once did?



These maybe uncomfortable questions for educators and could be debated on both sides. It is difficult to think that the skills we spent hours learning are not as important as they once were. More important than debating these questions is, are educators working to find approaches to teaching that meet the needs of every student in their classroom, not just the students that learn the way that they have always taught?

The purpose of educators is to be aware of the needs and interests of the learners in their classroom. This allows teachers to make connections with students that encourages them to be problem solvers, risk takers, creators, resilient, and reflective. Next time you think about using technology, think about what you are doing to promote creative thinking, making connections and challenging norms, not just filling in the blanks on a worksheet.

Geraldine Erickson



1st Annual ESU 17 Art Competition Results are in!

Winning artwork from the contest: *Nebraska's 150 Years* will be displayed in the Administration Building in downtown Ainsworth for one year. Students will also receive iTunes gift cards for winning artwork.

[Check out the list of winners!](#)

[Competition details can be found here](#)



Coming Soon!

Dec. 6: Winter Principal Mtg

Dec. 23-Jan.2: Christmas Break

Jan. 11: CIP Day - All Staff

Feb. 7: Advisory Council

Feb. 9: Student Discipline/Bullying

March 2-3: Spring Break



Thoughts to Ponder

“Give the pupils something to do, not something to learn; and the doing is of such a nature as to demand thinking; learning naturally results.”

—[John Dewey](#)

EHA Wellness

Winners:

Less is More!

The following individuals won \$25 gift certificates for participating in the Less is More fitness challenge. Local winners include:

Jen Lentz, ACS

Jeff McQuistan, ESU 17

Brandon Crawford, KPCS

Rhonda Ammon, RCPS

Brandi Hollenbeck, RCPS



Rich Lackaff Retires from ESU 17 Board



After 17 years of service to the ESU, Rich Lackaff has retired from his position. We thank him for his dedication and desire to help guide our organization. Pictured is Rich (center) at his last Board meeting in November.



Have a Healthy Holiday!

"Now there are more overweight people in America than average-weight people. So overweight people are now average. Which means you've met your New Year's resolution." ~Jay Leno

"It's bizarre that the produce manager is more important to my children's health than the pediatrician." ~Meryl Streep

"Our bodies are our gardens – our wills are our gardeners." ~William Shakespeare

Staying healthy can be a tough thing to do during the Holidays. Whether you get caught in the winter blues, gorge on holiday fare, or miss your workouts, here are some tips from [NIH: News in Health](#) for staying healthy during the Holidays:

- Enjoy a healthy breakfast to help prevent overeating later on.
- Eat what's best for you first. Fill at least half your plate with fresh fruit and veggies. You'll have less room for the rest.
- Bring a healthy dish to a party.
- Fruit by itself makes an excellent dessert. Try placing a bowl of clementines or apples on the holiday table.



- Avoid beverages that are high in calories and sugar.
- Keep a food journal to help track what you're eating.
- Instead of focusing on food, spend time with family, friends, and activities.
- Stay positive. If you eat more on some days, eat less on others. If you miss a workout, exercise a little longer the next day.

[Read more about it here](#)

Mandt Moment: Life Animated

One of the perks of flying a lot is that on some planes I get to watch movies, and I look for unusual movies I've not seen before. On my last flight, I watched a movie called "Life, Animated" and was so amazed by it. This is a documentary about the life of Owen Susskind, a young autistic man whose language and social skills began to deteriorate when he was about 3 years old. His language became garbled and the boy who jabbered and laughed with his family went away.

Ron Susskind, Owen's father, is a Pulitzer Prize winning journalist, and wrote a book by the same name about the journey of his son and their entire family through the years after a diagnosis of Pervasive Developmental Disorder. The word autism was also added, which scared the family. The movie is shown in a mix of home movies, documentary film, and animation that reflect Owen's inner world. The journey from 3 to 23 years old is told in flashbacks and with such great empathy. One film reviewer said it was "powerful and emotional without being manipulative", and that it was "deeply inspiring without meaning to be." (<http://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/life-animated-2016>).

Disney animated movies are Owen's favorite activity. In one scene, Owen says it was by reading the credits that he taught himself to read. Owen would say something to his family over and over, but they could not understand him. In a scene from "The Little Mermaid" Ariel gives up her voice to become human, and it is that scene that Owen used to say to his parents "just lost my voice." They realize this is what he was saying, but could not understand until Owen rewound the scene several times and then uttered his words.

Over the years of my work with The Mandt System, Inc. I have had the joy and honor of meeting families and their children who were autistic. The movie I saw was reflective of their struggles and gives hope to the parents, brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, and the friends of people who take life's journey on an autistic path. While Owen Susskind is a unique person, with a unique family history, the commonalities between Owen and a young man I met recently in Melbourne, Australia are there. I

could hear, in Owen's speech patterns, similar speech patterns in this man.

What was termed "sing-song arrhythmia" and "metaphorical speech" was actually a learned pattern of speech from his family. When this man was a child, his parents sang to him to communicate instructions, ask questions, and did so in a way that appeared to be fun for their child. This young man now sings his answers to questions, and rather than traditional speech therapy I suggested that a music therapist be used to start where this man is and guide him, over time, to a speech pattern more understandable by non-autistic persons.

Each autistic person has a unique story, just as each human being has a unique story. Disney movies become the bridge that empower Owen and his family to communicate with each other and build pathways that empower them to be a family again. What this movie did was to reinforce my approach of working with people where they are, using how they speak and what they love, as beginning points for contact. Meeting people where they are and using their strengths to meet their needs is what Positive Behavior Support is all about, and what we teach in The Mandt System®. What are called obsessions are, in reality, points of contact that offer a common language to connect autistics and the people who love them. You meet people where they are, and use their strengths as ways to build a future, together.

Near the end of the movie, Owen is invited to speak at a gathering of autistics in France. He teaches himself a few words of French, and then speaks for a few minutes. He says that people think autistic people don't want relationships, and that this is wrong. His voice is strong, his spirit even stronger and the hope that comes from this film strongest of all.

As you read this you may wonder why I am using the word "autistic" and not "person with autism." Most advocates see themselves as autistic the same way that a person may say "I am Italian" or "I am Black." These are identities that shape who we are, while diseases and disabilities affect what we do. The term "self advocate" is also not used, as Martin Luther King, Jr. was not a self-advocate, he was an advocate for his people and for all people. In the same way, Owen advocates not just for himself, but for all autistic persons. There is much to learn from this movie, and I highly recommend it!

Bob Bowen - Senior Adjunct Faculty

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