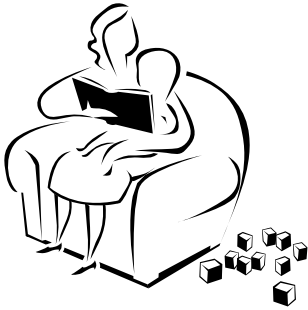


# H E L L O

Helping Early Learners Look Forward



## *The Region 9 Early Learning Committee (ELC)*

### *includes:*

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## Head Start Staff Development

Summer is coming and the Head Start staff has been working hard planning training opportunities for you. Ongoing training is a part of working in the Head Start Program and has become more important each year. Currently, Head Start staff is required to obtain 15 hours of training and staff development annually. Region 9 is working to meet this need in a variety of ways to better accommodate the staff and the distances that will be traveled. This summer, sessions will be offered that encompass a variety of topics in an attempt to reach the many disciplines we employ. At this time, we are preparing to offer 20+ sessions the week of June 23-26 that are specifically beneficial to the Head Start staff.

Online training is an option new to Head Start. This is established to assist staff in receiving training that is required both online and at their convenience. We currently have 3 trainings being offered to pilot this effort. The topics are required according to Head Start Performance Standards and upon completion, staff will receive credit to go toward the required hours. Head Start continues to promote learning and reaching those who are from our surrounding communities. For any further information, feel free to contact any Head Start staff here at Region 9.

**WEEK OF THE YOUNG CHILD —WATCH FOR THIS!** Our ELC will be sending out bracelets for the preschool students in our public schools again this year. Teachers of these groups will receive a packet of bracelets the week of April 6 for the students to wear the week of April 20. Please count them when you receive them to be sure you have enough. Contact one of the Committee members before APRIL 13 if you need additional bracelets.

## Are Happy Teachers the Best Teachers?

In a recent speech at Wellington College, the presenter, Patrick Nash, posed the question, “Are happy teachers the best teachers?” The notion that we can label a teacher “good, bad, or best” based on their degree of happiness is rarely helpful. As we all know, sometimes we have wonderful days in the classroom, when all the children are bright-eyed, hang on our every word, are engaged in each and every activity, the computer works perfectly, no one yells at us, a beautiful rainbow shines over our perfectly manicured playground, and we are happy. However, the very next day, 2 of our students get in a fight, 3 spontaneously contract “that stomach bug that’s going around”, the classroom pet failed to make it through the night, the computer crashes, and every child and adult we encounter either yells at us or is crying. Not only are we not happy, at that moment we hate our jobs. If we temporarily are unhappy or discouraged, does that make us a bad teacher? It’s unlikely.

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Most educators do not de-escalate from being a great teacher to a bad one based on their level of happiness. Happiness, or the lack of it, can certainly be circumstantial. It is profoundly difficult for anyone to feel happy in the wake of tragedy, grief, loss, or worry. But often, if we can get beyond those circumstances which life deals us, we find that happiness is often an attitude.

There is no question that the stress level educators feel is tremendous. The demands students, parents, administrators, increased paperwork, and state and government regulations place on us tend to make even the most laid-back educator feel overwhelmed. Most educators at various times suffer from stress, either work-related or personal. Whatever the cause, we owe it to our students, our families, and ourselves to try to understand and deal with the stress in our lives.

There are no simple answers to deal with stress; however, the first step involves identifying the root of our problems and taking responsibility for our own happiness and effectiveness as a teacher. Consider the following positive steps to help relieve stress:

Take control of your life and your lifestyle. List those things which bother you, then mark those which you can or cannot control. Work on practical solutions for those things which are in your control.

Prioritize your workload. Often we create more stress for ourselves by not focusing on those things which truly have priority. List those tasks which must be accomplished and check off items as they are completed. Often the very act of marking an item off a list provides a great deal of satisfaction and relief.

Ask for help to manage your workload, if needed.

Clarify your job duties. Many people feel anger or anxiety because they are unclear about what the job actually entails. It is hard to meet expectations if you do not know what the expectations are.

Ask for help from administrators or colleagues if your work environment is difficult. Educators seem to feel comfortable asking for help with curriculum, assessment, or classroom management, but not with the work environment. Most administrators want staff to feel supported, content, and ultimately happy.

Take a break. Get up and walk or move around. Muscle tension adds to stress.

Find a network or support system of people who can understand the pressure you feel.

Talk about or journal why you chose the education profession and try to remember what you fundamentally felt passionate about when you first became an educator.

Use positive self-talk. Telling yourself you are happy rather than miserable goes a long way in creating a more positive mental attitude.

Leave work at work and home problems at home.

Consider counseling if your situation or attitude does not improve.

Perhaps the question "Do happy teachers make the best teachers?" is not the right question. Whether we call it happiness, contentment, or mental well-being, those people who take action to change their thoughts, attitude, or circumstances are those who ultimately feel a higher level of job satisfaction. The more job satisfaction a teacher feels will positively impact both the students and the campus climate. Developing a positive mental attitude is instrumental in allowing us to regain the passion we once felt as we first stepped into the classroom and thought, "I love teaching. I am happy."

## SAVE THE DATES:



| DATE AND TIME     | SESSION ID | TITLE                                       | LOCATION/CONTACT         |
|-------------------|------------|---|--------------------------|
| March 3, 2009     | 1812.5130  | Autism 101                                  | Region 9/Christian Avera |
| August 4, 2009    | 1929.5474  | Autism with Paula Kluth                     | Region 9/Christian Avera |
| April 19-25, 2009 | N/A        | Week of the Young Child                     | Everywhere!              |
| June 22-26, 2009  | Various    | Early Learning Week                         | Region 9 ESC/ELC         |
| July 20-22, 2009  | N/A        | 2009 Academy for Teachers of Young Children | Amarillo/Rita Reeder     |