

# Curriculum & Instruction Update

Fairfield City School District

## Happy Holidays!

Hopefully, everyone has wonderful plans for the upcoming break. As we move into the last couple of days before our break, we all know that students of all ages can have some difficulty staying focused. Below are a few links that may be of help as you make your final plans for 2015.

- ⇒ [Engage and Motivate Your Students Before the Holiday Break](#)
- ⇒ [10 Tips to Stay Focused Before Holiday Break](#)
- ⇒ [How to Keep Online and Blended Students Engaged around the Holiday Season.](#)



## Decision Day Results!

After several hours of discussing which materials would best serve Fairfield students for high school math core courses and kindergarten through fifth grade language arts, there was consensus!

On December 3rd, approximately forty-five kindergarten through fifth grade teachers

decided that Reach for Reading, a National Geographic product, will be implemented in 2016-17.

On December 8th, approximately twelve teachers of math high school courses came to consensus that Big Ideas Math, a Houghton Mifflin Harcourt product, will be implemented in 2016-17

for Algebra I, Algebra II, and Geometry.

Further information regarding the training for these instructional materials will be forthcoming. Small group work (calendars and assessments) will also be resuming for these courses before the 2015-16 school year ends.

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## Reminders

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# Marcia Tate's 20 Strategies

Last month, the first five of Marcia Tate's "20 Instructional Strategies That Take Advantage of How the Brain Learns Best" were highlighted. Read below to learn about 5 more strategies and be sure to watch the new video.

6) **Role Play**—Having students up and actively engaged in the content (rather than the teacher doing all the work) not only goes a long way toward ensuring that they pass any tests, but they will remember the information long after the test is over. That is why people tend to not forget how to drive a car, ride a bike, or play an instrument.

7) **Visualization**—Being able to visualize what you read is a skill all readers need (in every content). Thinking aloud to your class teaches them how to visualize while reading. Mental imagery is how we process the real world, which is how good readers visualize while reading text. A

*picture in your mind creates a memory you can find (Sprenger, 2007).*

8) **Metaphor/Analogy/Simile**—Since the brain thinks in connections, any strategy that helps students connect content together is meaningful to memory. These figures of speech should be used to connect concepts that are unfamiliar to students that are familiar. *Examples: The secret of education lies in respecting the pupil. (R. W. Emerson); Multiplication is addition on speed. (Michelle-student).*

9) **Reciprocal Teaching & Cooperative Learning**—Encourage students to talk in class? Brain research tells us that students learn 90% of what they say or discuss as they complete an activity and 95% of what they teach to others. *Examples: Divide your class into groups, or families, of four to six. (The word families satisfies the brain's basic need to belong.) Allowing families to discuss a topic provides opportunities*

for more students to talk than would an entire class discussion. Students working with a close partner (CP) can reteach a concept or summarize key points throughout class. *Two heads are better than one!*

10) **Music**—Ever heard the saying, "Music soothes the savage beast,"? Over 50% of behavior problems can be reduced by creating a calming classroom environment with music. *Examples: classical music (baroque period; 50-70 beats per minute) - when students are entering class or completing seat work; R & B - fun times; upbeat, high-tempo - conversational work (Jensen, 2009).*

[Click here to check out FCSD teachers and students putting these strategies to use.](#)

## Tech Tip Reminders!

Have you ever wanted to remember a past tech tip, find a lost smart sheet, or explore a new tech tool to use? Did you know you can access this information 24/7 on FirstClass in the Tech Conference? Inside the conference are numerous folders with smartsheets and other information on technology used district wide - no matter your building or role. There are also folders to access important tech policies or forms and to access past Tech Tip Tuesday emails. Finally, the Digital Resources and Tools workbook is an

on-going work-in-progress with web resources organized by topic. Visit the tech conference often - we are always adding more!

Contact Dan Jeffers, Katie Pennell, or Lori Wegman if you have any tech questions or suggestions.

Some recently added tools include:

- Real Time Boards (a web-based white board)
- Just Apricot (feedback tool to involve parents)
- Epic! (library of early childhood books)
- Blendspace (create digital lessons)
- Photos for Class (age/school appropriate, Creative Commons licensed, and cited)
- OfficeMix (make your PowerPoint presentations interactive)
- SumDog (content-based games)
- ClassCraft (gamify your classroom)