

# Snapshots



RESEARCH ROUND-UP

## 3 Brain-based Strategies to Try This Year

### 1 ENCOURAGE GESTURES IN CLASSROOMS

Young learners who use gestures outperform their peers in problem-solving tasks. In a study published in August in *Developmental Psychology*, San Francisco State researchers challenged children ages 2 to 5 to sort cards with colored shapes first by color, then by shape. Children who used

gestures—such as rotating their hands to illustrate the image on the card—performed the task better. In fact, younger children who gestured succeeded more than older children who didn't.

Students also happen to learn better when teachers use gestures. Research published this spring in *Child Development* indicates that second, third, and fourth graders learned new math concepts faster when teachers used hand motions to illustrate concepts.

### 2 CHALLENGE TEACHERS TO PREDICT THEIR STUDENTS' MISTAKES

Teachers who can predict what their students don't know are better equipped to help them learn. Philip Sadler, director of the science education department at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics, and colleagues tested 181 middle school physical science teachers and nearly 10,000 of their students. The teachers were asked to take a test twice: once filling out the correct answers, and once with answers they thought students would give. When students were tested, their scores over the course of the year improved most when their teachers had been able to predict their wrong answers.

This study demonstrates that for teachers, the ability to think like a student may be just as important as being thoroughly well-versed in content.

## MYTWOCENTS

What's one way you energize your staff at the beginning of the school year?

I like to talk about our favorite memories from when we were students, and have veteran teachers remember their first classrooms and try to conjure up the excitement of that first experience. We talk about *The First Days of School*, by Harry Wong, set expectations, and review "Love and Logic" techniques for classroom management. We try to welcome our new teachers into our school family by pairing them with a mentor or grade-level partner, and building their enthusiasm for their first experiences.

—Shelly Fuller (via facebook)

### 3 | GIVE BUDDING ENGINEERS AN EXTRA BOOST

Exceptional spatial reasoning at age 13 predicts academic achievement years—even decades—later, according to research published this July in *Psychological Science*. Vanderbilt University researchers followed up with 563 students who scored in the top 0.5 percent on the SATs. As anticipated, participants' math and verbal reasoning at age 13 predicted scholarly attainments 30 years later. But spacial ability—the capacity to mentally manipulate 2D and 3D figures—was an even stronger predictor of academic and creative achievements.

“These students have exceptional and under-challenged potential, espe-

#### BONUS FACTOID



**DESK A CONSTANT MESS?** Don't fret. Studies conducted by University of Minnesota researchers indicate that working in an orderly space encourages people to do what's expected of them—but working in a disorderly room sparks more creative ideas.

cially for engineering and technology,” lead researcher David Lubinski explains. “We could do a much better job of identifying these students and affording them better opportunities for developing their talents.”

### Buzzword: Genius Hour

**What it means:** Genius Hour is sixty minutes each week that students spend working on an independent study of their choice. Genius Hour was sparked by a practice at Google, whose engineers are allowed to spend 20 percent of their time on any project they like.

**Biggest challenge for K-8:** Teachers decide how long projects last, if students work in groups, and how to structure in- and out-of-class work. But, time and logistics (such as supplies and space) are challenges.

**Why it matters:** Genius Hour gives students an opportunity for autonomous, inquiry-based exploration—differentiation at its best.

Visit [20timeineducation.com](http://20timeineducation.com) for planning tips and project ideas.

### Principal Goes Digital

**IPAD DEVOTEES, GET ready:** *Principal* has gone digital! Reading the magazine in the way that works for you just got that much simpler. The new digital edition is easy to read, searchable, and even bookmarkable.

NAESP members will continue to receive the print edition, which will still be available on the NAESP website with printable PDFs. Flip through the digital magazine at [naesp.org](http://naesp.org) and send us your feedback at [publications@naesp.org](mailto:publications@naesp.org).

### Hats Off to Principals During National Principals Month

**WHILE NAESP SALUTES**

principals all year long, October is National Principals Month, and the Association is celebrating school leaders with a host of activities. Visit [principalsmonth.org](http://principalsmonth.org) for the latest updates and information on how to join the fun.



### Conference 2013: The Learning Continues Online

**RELIVE THE HIGHLIGHTS** from NAESP's 2013 Annual Conference in Baltimore online at the E-Conference Learning Center. Attendees can view full presentations from speakers such as U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, Freeman Hrabowski, and Todd Whitaker. Missed the conference? View clips of the presentations and read full recaps by fellow principals. Visit



[naesp.org/2013-conference-recap](http://naesp.org/2013-conference-recap), or scan this code, which connects to NAESP's YouTube channel.

Don't forget to check NAESP's website for updates about the 2014 conference in Nashville.

**We do scavenger hunts in town with local businesses that send the whole team to the local bowling alley for some afternoon fun. Or a ropes course for team building. Or “Get Acquainted Bingo” with fun facts shared by staff members. We look at last year's data and make some goals around it—but this is done best after some fun and bonding.**

—Sonya Hemmen, Head of School, Ross Montessori Charter School, Glenwood Springs, Colorado