



THE CENTER *for* TRANSFORMATIVE
TEACHING & LEARNING
AT ST. ANDREW'S EPISCOPAL SCHOOL

The Bridge

v. 2.1

Welcome back to *The Bridge*, the monthly newsletter of the Center for Transformative Teaching and Learning. Each month *The Bridge* analyzes a specific aspect of teaching and learning through a Mind, Brain and Education Science research-informed lens.

A Fresh (Research-Informed) Start to a New School Year

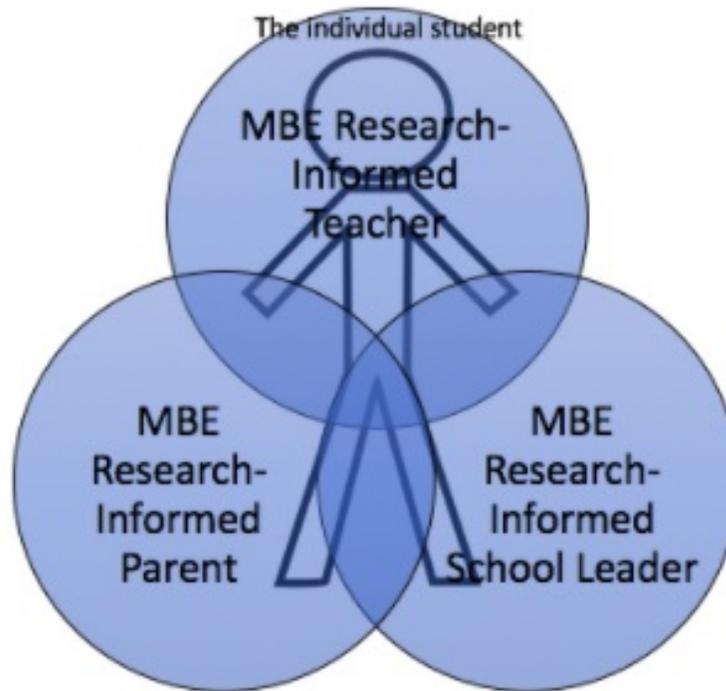
By Glenn Whitman

Veteran teachers, students, and alumni of St. Andrew's are very familiar with the way former Assistant Head of School, John Holden, would commence each new school year. Though John's brief "fresh start speech" (view it [here](#)) does not intentionally reference Mind, Brain, and Education science research, it certainly aligns with research of the [Mindset Scholars Network](#) and [Carol Dweck](#) as well as research around grit and character from [Angela Duckworth](#). An integral part of John's speech is also that metacognition moment: the request of each individual student to reflect on his or her learning journey and to create goals in line with his or her current strengths and challenges.

As I was in the audience for sixteen of John's fresh start speeches, sitting side-by-side with my new advisees, I often thought that John's speech missed an opportunity to also include teachers and parents. They too should approach the new school year with a "fresh start mindset." Mind, Brain, Education science can help us as teachers and parents have our own research-informed start to the new school year.

The [Center for Transformative Teaching and Learning](#)'s priority is to help 100% of St. Andrew's teachers, students, and parents use MBE science research to inform, validate, and transform how they challenge and support every student. St. Andrew's has certainly come a long way in its MBE journey that began in 2007. St. Andrew's preschool through twelfth grade teachers have written publications such as *Think Differently and Deeply*, *Neuroteach*, and the forthcoming design thinking *Guide to Imagination* workbook that bridge the gap between MBE science research and practice to help teachers and parents support their students more effectively.

Imagine each individual student collaborating with MBE research-informed teachers, parents, and school leaders every day. Fostering that MBE research-informed community continues to be the ambitious goal of the CTTL.



So, let's consider what Mind, Brain, and Education science research suggests teachers, parents, and students should start, continue, or stop doing. Here are some research-informed suggestions for each group. Many are derived from the book *Neuroteach: Brain Science and the Future of Education* that I co-authored with the CTTL's Head of Research, Dr. Ian Kelleher, while some strategies come from other MBE translational leaders such as [The Learning Scientists](#) and Mark McDaniel, author of our favorite book on memory, *Make It Stick*.

Use the checkboxes to see which strategies you are currently using from our table below:

Teachers	Students	Parents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ <i>Engage</i> students from the first class with something beyond reading the course syllabus or going over class rules ❑ <i>Prioritize</i> knowing each student and his or her passions ❑ <i>Build</i> relationships ❑ <i>Honor</i> the research behind neuroplasticity and recognize that every student can improve (avoiding labels is a must) ❑ <i>Connect</i> learning to lives ❑ <i>Evaluate</i> the prior knowledge and interests a student brings to a class through formative assessment ❑ <i>Don't</i> give an anxiety-inducing quiz about summer reading ❑ <i>Be</i> deliberate about what homework you assign ❑ <i>Honor</i> the process not the speed of student thinking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ <i>Organize</i> your notebook, computer desktop and workspace at home before the first day of school ❑ <i>Reflect</i> on what strategies worked and did not work for last year in each of your courses ❑ <i>Commit</i> to avoiding task switching between focused work on an assignment and social media (it actually leads to more time on the assignment) ❑ <i>Self-advocate</i> when something is unclear or when you want to further explore an idea, topic, or skill ❑ <i>Establish</i> one or two learning goals (not achievement or grade goals) ❑ <i>Space</i> out how you study and prepare for tests, quizzes, papers, or projects ❑ <i>Challenge</i> yourself when you study by practicing what you don't yet know 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ <i>Encourage</i> your students to use the strategies in the middle column ❑ <i>Ask</i> your child to explain something specific that he or she learned in a class or to teach you something they are learning ❑ <i>Prioritize</i> giving specific praise of your child's effort versus merely praising your child's achievement ❑ <i>Avoid</i> asking, "What do you have for homework?" as the first post-school day interaction with your child
<p>For all teachers, students, and parents: <i>strive</i> to sleep 8 hours per night, an underappreciated learning and well-being strategy for teachers, students, and parents.</p>		

In addition to John's fresh start speech, he left behind another mantra that is embedded in the DNA of St. Andrew's and the work of the CTTL. It came in the form of a question that emerged each time the adults in the community considered new curriculum initiatives, program changes, and time management: "Who are we doing this for?" The answer is central to each of our commitments to a MBE research-informed fresh start to the new school year: "For each individual student." Have a great year!



Upcoming CTTL Events

Monday, October 2:

Cleverlands: What America Can Learn from the World's Most Successful Schools- The CTTL will host Lucy Crehan, author of *Cleverlands: The Secrets Behind the Success of the World's Education Superpowers*, on Monday, October 2nd. Lucy's firsthand, international experience researching what makes for great teachers and schools in Finland, Japan, Singapore, Shanghai, and Canada. Korea provides an important perspective for teachers, school leaders, and policymakers considering the future of education in the United States.

[For tickets and more information, click here](#)

This event is free for St. Andrew's community members (employees, parents, students, and alumni).

Saturday, October 7th:

School Ideas Drive hosted in partnership with the [The Educators' Lab](#).

The School Ideas Drive is a community-building event that enables educators to learn about and connect with local organizations that offer exciting new resources and opportunities for teachers and students. The D.C. metro area is home to a multitude of organizations and individuals striving to improve teaching and learning. How might we work together to connect our classrooms and communities so that students have access to an array of ideas and resources that go beyond the classroom?

Join us as we work together to brainstorm ways to engage students in the learning process by connecting our classrooms to the outside world. Using aspects of design thinking and various collaboration techniques we will uncover how we make synergies with local organizations that inspire real world application and improve teaching and learning.

For tickets and more information click [here](#).

