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Teacher Times

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FRESH IDEAS FOR YOUR SUMMER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Summertime, and the Teaching and Learning Is…Still Happening!

Fun, sun, and…professional development? It doesn't exactly roll off the tongue, but summer, for many teachers, is a time not only of rest and rejuvenation, but also an opportunity to cultivate new skills, competencies, understandings, and thought processes that can be used in the classroom during the next academic year. Do you want to take a deep dive into the language and meaning of academic standards so that you can design and deliver more precise and powerful lessons and assessments aligned to them? Have you been meaning to investigate different options for earning CEUs in order to renew your teaching license or advance your career? Are you planning to implement new technology in your classroom in the fall and need some direction and guidance for how to do it effectively? Read on for ideas and tips on how to accomplish all of these goals, and more.

Diving into the Common Core State Standards

The Common Core State Standards have been undergoing phased implementation since adoptions began in 2010. In many school districts, this process has been challenging, as the training, curriculum, assessment, and technology provided to teachers has lagged behind the expected timetables for implementation and the content of the standards themselves.

Are you still wondering to what exact skills broad verbs like "understand," "analyze" and "demonstrate"

refer? Are you concerned about making sure your students are well-prepared for high-stakes tests aligned to the standards? Now is the perfect time to explore one or more of our free curated resources to further build your understanding and comfort with the CCSS.

This Month's Q&A

Q: What are micro-credentials?

How can the learning, progress, and skill mastery that occurs on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis be captured and recognized? In one word: micro-credentials. Micro-credentials are certificates of competency that validate and represent a professional's knowledge and skills in a variety of discrete, or "micro," areas, both content- and practice-based. Although micro-credentials are gaining popularity in many different fields, they are especially useful and well-suited to the educational arena. Micro-credentials allow teachers to account for and leverage the professional development and achievement that occurs in their planning sessions, classrooms, and interactions each day. But how exactly do micro-credentials work? What topic areas and skills do they cover, and how can teachers earn them? Digital Promise, in partnership with Bloomboard, recently launched an innovative program that provides a clear and convenient path for educators seeking micro-credentials. In this program, educators select the micro-credentials they wish to attain, review the research-backed requirements, assemble and submit evidence of mastery, and await scoring by an expert based on a comprehensive rubric. Digital Promise issues micro-credentials in the form of digital badges to those who fulfill the requirements, and provides feedback and an opportunity to resubmit evidence to those who do not. These digital badges can be shown to administrators, colleagues, and other associates on professional networking platforms. In some states, micro-credentials are recognized as formal continuing education units. Have you ever considered earning a micro-credential? Whether you're a master of building grit and resilience in your students, an expert in teaching active listening strategies, a data analyzer of the highest order, or excel in any number of other specialties, there might be a micro-credential opportunity waiting for you.

Meeting of the Minds: Summer/Fall 2016 Conferences

Meet colleagues from around the country and the world, share ideas on topics like reaching diverse learners and integrating technology in the classroom, and learn about the latest and greatest in innovative practices as you develop your professional repertoire at a summer or fall conference. Check out one of the following 14 educational conferences, and don't forget to speak with your principal or administrator about how you can earn continuing education units for attendance.

Making the Most of Your Time at Conferences

Conferences can be a whirlwind of keynote speakers, exhibit walks, demonstrations, Q&A sessions, hands-on workshops, networking events, discussion panels, and more, all packed into just a few days.

How can you maximize your learning and professional development so that your time is well-spent and your attendance reaps far-reaching benefits for your career? Follow the 3 P's of conference attendance:

Prepare: Review the list of presenters, topics, and exhibits before you arrive so that you're familiar with your options. If there is someone with whom you would like to connect, consider contacting him/her beforehand to set up a meeting. Remember as well to bring any materials you need to take notes to better capture your learning.

Prioritize: You cannot attend every session or event, so be strategic about which ones you focus on and stick with them. It's easy to get distracted given all the competing stimuli, but more often than not, it's more valuable to glean in-depth information about discrete topics that are meaningful to you than gain cursory knowledge about an array of topics that may not relate closely to your goals or career.

Participate: Many educational workshops feature interactive discussion panels or workshops; take advantage of these opportunities to get involved. Ask questions, volunteer your comments, and work with teams to complete activities. Listening is great, but learning by doing can be even better. Make an effort to converse with fellow attendees as well—it's a wonderful way to build camaraderie, have some fun, and share knowledge!

No-Cost Professional Development Solutions

How can you develop as a professional at your own pace, on your own timetable, and when it makes the most sense for you—like just before teaching a new skill or strategy, or just after your school has acquired a new piece of technology? Fortunately, we've curated a number of free professional development webinars, workshops, and modules available online for busy teachers looking to maximize learning with limited time. Some of these opportunities may even contribute toward continuing education units upon completion—check with your principal or administrator so you don't miss out!

Welcome to Item Writing Camp

It may not sound quite as cool as space camp, but participating in a self-paced "item writing camp" by exploring free online technology-enhanced assessment tools can be a fun—and useful—way to spend some of your time this summer.

One place where you can "go to camp" is [Wisewire,](#) an education marketplace that features a free interactive formative assessment tool where you can experiment with dozens of item formats (such as drag and drop, hotspot, and graphing), clone provided items, group assessment items, send them to students, and track their scores. You can even request to become an author to share and sell your creations to other teachers.

To access the tool, create a free account on [Wisewire,](#) log in, and then select "My Dashboard" from the drop-down menu under your name to enter the platform. View sample questions beneath "Resources" and check out the [platform FAQ](#) and [user guide](#) for instructions on how to navigate the various pages and features. You can request to [become an author](#) to share or even sell your creations on the Wisewire marketplace.

Assessment Item Checklist

 Writing an assessment item is one thing; writing a scientifically and pedagogically sound, rigorous, engaging, aligned, relevant, and ultimately valuable item that provides true evidence of learning or lack thereof is entirely another! Check out Wisewire's [checklist for constructing sound assessment items](#) that yield the valuable evidence you need.

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