



MVP SPACES

A Holistic Learning Environment ———

**A guide for using
essential **STAPLEs**
in the classroom.**

Simple **T**echniques to **A**chieve a **P**ositive **L**earning **E**nvironment

Anthony M. Chiles, Ed.S.

ANTHONY **M** CHILES

Inspiring Real Connections, in the Digital Age

Anthony M. Chiles is an engaging communicator and an expert in helping people build real connections with others and create positive learning environments in schools. With over 18 years of experience as an educator and administrator in Georgia, Anthony is deeply committed to servant leadership and applies a head, heart, and hands approach to teaching others.



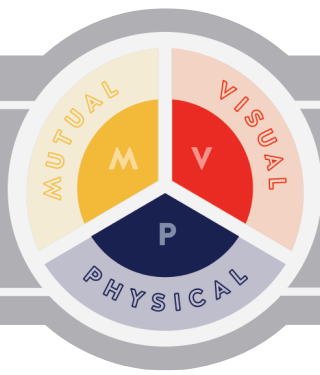
Anthony holds a Bachelor of Music Education from Berry College, where he developed a strong foundation in music and the arts. He then pursued further academic achievements, obtaining a Master's and Specialist in Educational Leadership from Georgia College and State University. Additionally, Anthony has earned a Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Math (STEAM) Endorsement from Augusta University, equipping him with a multidisciplinary perspective that enhances his ability to address complex challenges in today's educational landscape.

Anthony cherishes his role as a husband to Sherrie and a father to their six beautiful children. Growing up as a military dependent, he has had the privilege of experiencing diverse cultures and backgrounds, instilling in him a deep appreciation for inclusivity and a genuine desire to support individuals from all walks of life. He is dedicated to creating transformative experiences and empowering others to thrive personally and professionally.

Stay Connected:



@anthonymchiles



The Introduction

THE WHAT

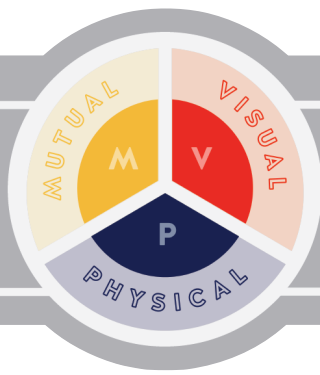
MVP Spaces is a guide to support an educator's practice in Mutual, Visual, and Physical learning spaces. Eight practices support each space called STAPLEs (Simple Techniques to Achieve a Positive Learning Environment) and are grounded in four principles: Relevance, Empathy, Action, and Lifelong Learning. Insight into these spaces provides an educator with a personalized framework to create a holistic learning environment for their students. MVP Spaces provides the blueprint for educators to engage in high-quality teaching and learning techniques, centralized in one location and simplified to implement with consistency and fidelity.

THE WHY

Creating holistic learning environments is essential for students to thrive socially, academically, and emotionally. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of such environments, particularly in disruptive and uncertain circumstances. However, many students and educators who rely on the consistency and structure of traditional face-to-face instruction need help to navigate the ever-changing landscape of blended and online learning. The research for creating positive learning environments includes many strategies to enhance an educator's toolkit. For example, one way to foster a positive learning environment is to establish clear and consistent expectations for behavior and learning, including structured and predictable routines and clear classroom participation guidelines. When students know these expectations, they are more likely to feel secure and confident executing them. Unfortunately, implementing effective strategies fails due to the need to implement them with consistency and fidelity. As a result, some educators have begun to review their core practices and are renewing their commitment and engagement in these techniques.

THE HOW

The Educator will first take the MVP Spaces Survey to analyze the perspective and use of the 24 STAPLEs in the Mutual, Visual, and Physical spaces. The survey questions are based on the REAL Education principles and help guide the implementation of each technique, focusing on consistency and fidelity. Each STAPLE includes (if applicable) a scripted activity and supporting documentation. Instructional examples videos of each STAPLE can be found on mvpspaces.com.



What is REAL Education?

Relevance in education focuses on a person's needs according to time and context. Relevant teaching engages students emotionally and connects prior knowledge to support the development of neural connections and long-term memory storage.^[7] Students must feel that the information they are learning is useful, valuable, and essential for their future. Relevance is most impactful when learning is connected to everyday life applications and as information moves from theory to practice.^[37] Background knowledge through scaffolding supports relevance by bridging the knowledge gap of new learning material. Relevant, real-world instruction can empower students to take ownership of their learning experiences.

Empathy in education is a teachable attribute innate in all people. We learn from a young age to “feel what others feel.” When explicitly taught and modeled, empathy teaches us to understand another person's point of view while using the information to inform our actions based on the situation.^[78] Compassionate action takes shape when empathy is enacted, whether a hug, a helping hand, or a shoulder to cry on.^[64] The golden rule “treat others as you want to be treated” is evident in nearly all cultures and ethnicities. Empathy teaches us how to interact with each other without judgment. Empathy interactions allow us to build social connections with others, regulate our own emotions, and promote helping behaviors.^[15] A culture of respect, trust, and teamwork is established when empathy is understood, modeled, and reinforced.

Action in education is a driving force for active engagement. Daily activity that includes mental and physical experiences is needed to support creative and critical thinking skills in learning.^[47,73] Active learning allows students to be fully engaged in their education through hands-on learning, collaborative group work, and memorable experiences.^[74] Experiences that are mentally and physically demanding to develop deeper learning connections.^[7] We remember what we touch. Taking active brain breaks during instruction allows the brain to retain information and focus attention. While the instructional approach sets the stage for an active classroom, the way a learning space is physically set up is equally important to the overall success of the active system.^[41,70] Being mentally and physically active benefits the body and mind by reducing stress and improving mood and overall mental health.^[12]

Lifelong-Learning is a process where one can learn, unlearn and relearn continuously. [20] History's greatest pioneers, inventors, and leaders have utilized continuous learning to create and improve significant human advancements in transportation, agriculture, and technology. Through trial and error, creating and destroying, defining and redefining, lifelong learning provides us with a wealth of knowledge on developing continually. Lifelong learning builds innovation and creativity in finding solutions for age-old problems still waiting to be solved. [39]

Lifelong-Learning does not occur in a single location, at a particular time, or in one attempt but is flexible, timeless, and omnipresent. Students in the 21st century can now learn from anyone, anywhere, and anytime. [39] Continuous improvement encourages an endless pursuit of understanding the world around us and how to make it better, including ourselves.

Combining Mutual, Visual, and Physical Spaces with the foundational principles of relevance, empathy, action, and lifelong learning creates a holistic learning environment. To truly educate students, we must return to the simple, integrated format that has produced some of the greatest minds in history. This means providing learning experiences that are experiential, meaningful, and connected to all aspects of life. The focus should be on providing a well-rounded education that extends beyond economic or political considerations and encompasses a Real, Experiential, Authentic, and Lifelong approach. This approach is vital for preparing students for the demands of the 21st century.

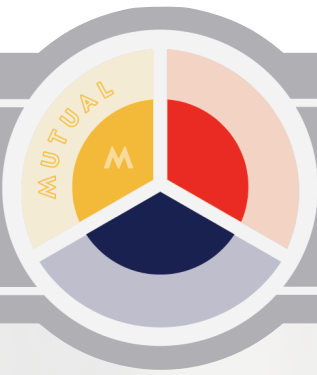
*A note from the Author of **MVP SPACES**:*

Thank you for being so committed to creating and sustaining holistic learning environments. By utilizing these techniques, MVP Spaces will help new and veteran teachers become REAL Educators. Our students depend on us to come alongside them and facilitate their learning in meaningful and engaging ways. We can do it. Let us work together and make it happen!

Sincerely,



Anthony M. Chiles
MVP Spaces, Creator



MUTUAL SPACE

STAPLE & Definitions

Mutual Space | A collaborative space where two or more people can continually respect, recognize, and relate to one another.

M1

Involve Students In Decision-Making

M2

Learn About Student Interests and Backgrounds

M3

Greet Students At The Door

M4

Give 4:1 Positive vs Corrective Feedback

M5

Engage Students In Community Meetings

M6

Tell Students About Yourself

M7

Make Positive Contact With Parents

M8

Start Each Day With A Clean Slate

R.E.A.L. Education Connection

R

Relevance | having significant and demonstrable bearing on the matter at hand.

E

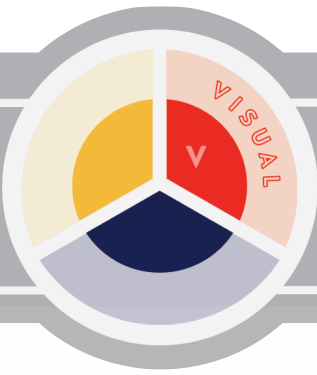
Empathy | the ability to understand and share the feelings of another.

A

Action | the manner or method of performing.

L

Lifelong-Learning | knowledge acquired by systematic study in any field or scholarly application.



VISUAL SPACE

STAPLE & Definitions

Visual Space | Aspects of a space balanced with examples, exposures, and experiences to support learning.

V1 Model Expectations

V2 Post A Variety of Student Work

V3 Provide Low Light

V4 Display High Quality Exemplars

V5 Use Media to Enhance Learning

V6 Display Different Cultural Perspectives

V7 Use Natural Light

V8 Display Universal Vocabulary

R.E.A.L. Education Connection

R **Relevance** | having significant and demonstrable bearing on the matter at hand.

E **Empathy** | the ability to understand and share the feelings of another.

A **Action** | the manner or method of performing.

L **Lifelong-Learning** | knowledge acquired by systematic study in any field or scholarly application.



PHYSICAL SPACE

STAPLE & Definitions

Physical Space | Property or body of a safe, clean, and nurturing space to support a positive learning environment.

P1

Play Low, Soft Music

P2

Provide Flexible Seating Options

P3

Use Hands-on Activities

P4

Keep All Areas Clean & Organized

P5

Make Learning Mobile

P6

Use a Student Reflection Area

P7

Take Active Brain Breaks

P8

Give Students Classroom Jobs

R.E.A.L. Education Connection

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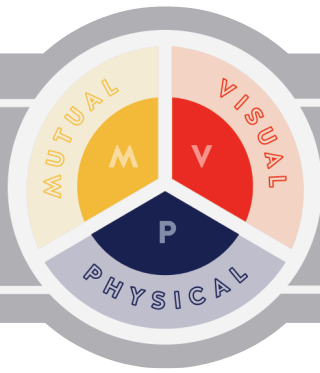
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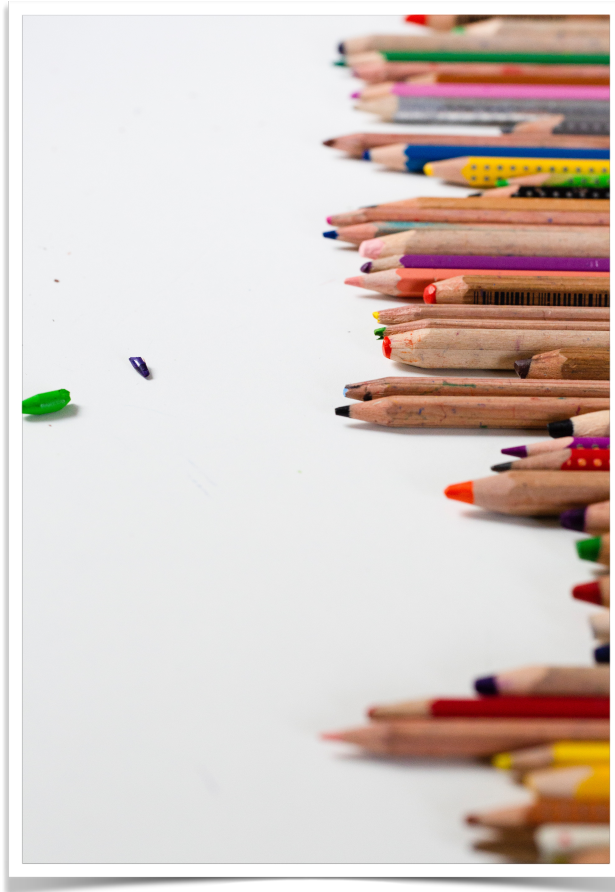
Action | the manner or method of performing.

L

Lifelong-Learning | knowledge acquired by systematic study in any field or scholarly application.



Opening S.T.A.P.L.E. Love Your Students



We came into the education profession because of our love for children and the desire to teach them. The students we teach come from all different walks of life. Students come to school broken, sharp, or in between.

Being able to love students no matter how they come to us is key to building positive relationships. Showing love through empathy, patience, and kindness can transform a child's life.

Children genuinely do not care how much we know until they know how much we care.

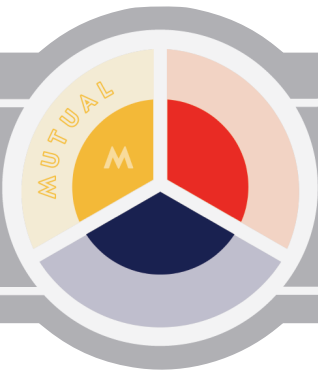
R.E.A.L. Education Connection

Relevance: Teachers can personalize the learning experience by including content that aligns with students' interests and cultures, making learning more meaningful and engaging.

Empathy: Teachers can create a supportive learning environment by being emotionally present and available to students, listening to their concerns, and acknowledging their feelings.

Action: Teachers can actively facilitate student learning by providing timely feedback and using various teaching strategies to engage learning styles.

Lifelong Learning: They can encourage students to explore and pursue their interests inside and outside the classroom.



STAPLE #1

Learn About Student Interests and Backgrounds



Using a student interest survey or general class discussion can be valuable tools to learn more about student interests and backgrounds. Throughout the survey or discussion, allow students to use the 3-2-1 share method:

- Share 3 relevant experiences you have had recently or in the past.
- Share 2 places of interest you have visited or want to visit.
- Share 1 surprise you're willing to share with others.

[Research Resource \[18,44\]](#)

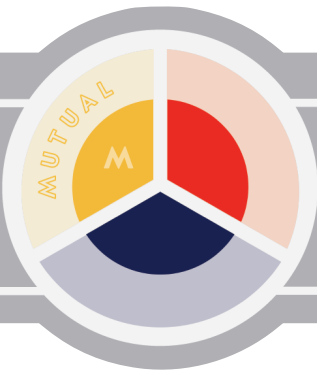
R.E.A.L. Education Connection

Relevance: By understanding students' backgrounds and interests, teachers can make learning more relevant to their lives.

Empathy: Teachers can better understand their students' perspectives and experiences, which can help them create a supportive and inclusive learning environment.

Action: Teachers can identify areas where their students may need additional support. For example, if a teacher knows that a student comes from a low-income household, they may be more likely to provide extra resources or support to help the student succeed.

Lifelong Learning: Teachers can instill a love of learning that lasts a lifetime which can help them continue learning outside the classroom and pursue their interests and passions.



STAPLE #2

Greet Students At The Door



Greeting students at the door is an essential first step in setting the tone for positive interaction. Engaging students upon entering the room gives important feedback on a student's demeanor and how to respond. Three tips for greeting students include:

1. Smile – We are naturally drawn to people that smile. Additionally, smiling elevates our mood and reduces stress.
2. Make Eye Contact – Looking into your students' eyes can tell a lot about how they are feeling.
3. Nice Notice – Notice something nice about a student and tell them.

[Research Resource \[2,44\]](#)

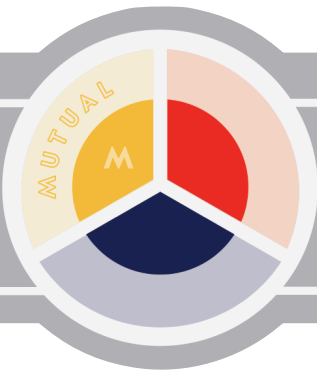
R.E.A.L. Education Connection

Relevance: Greeting students shows that teachers value the students and are interested in their well-being.

Empathy: Greeting students allows teachers to connect with their students on a personal level. This can help teachers understand their students' needs and experiences.

Action: Greeting students can help quickly identify students needing additional support or resources. For example, if a teacher notices that a student seems upset or distracted, they can follow up with the student to see if they need help.

Lifelong Learning: When teachers create a warm and welcoming environment, students are more likely to feel comfortable asking questions, making mistakes, and taking risks.



STAPLE #3

Involve Students in Decision-Making



When students are involved in making decisions, an increase in collaboration and ownership of learning occurs. Additionally, students feel valued and believe their input matters. Three tips to support decision making include:

1. **Setting Expectations** – At the beginning of the year, build a set of expectations created by both teacher and students.
2. **Communicate Clearly** – Discuss which decisions can be a collaborative effort and which are non-negotiable.
3. **Encourage Participation** – Be sure all students feel included in the process.

[Research Resource \[45.76\]](#)

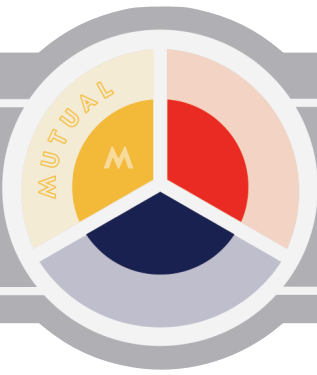
R.E.A.L. Education Connection

Relevance: When students can see the relevance of decisions to their lives, they are more likely to engage and take ownership of the process.

Empathy: When students feel heard and understood, they are more likely to participate in decision-making.

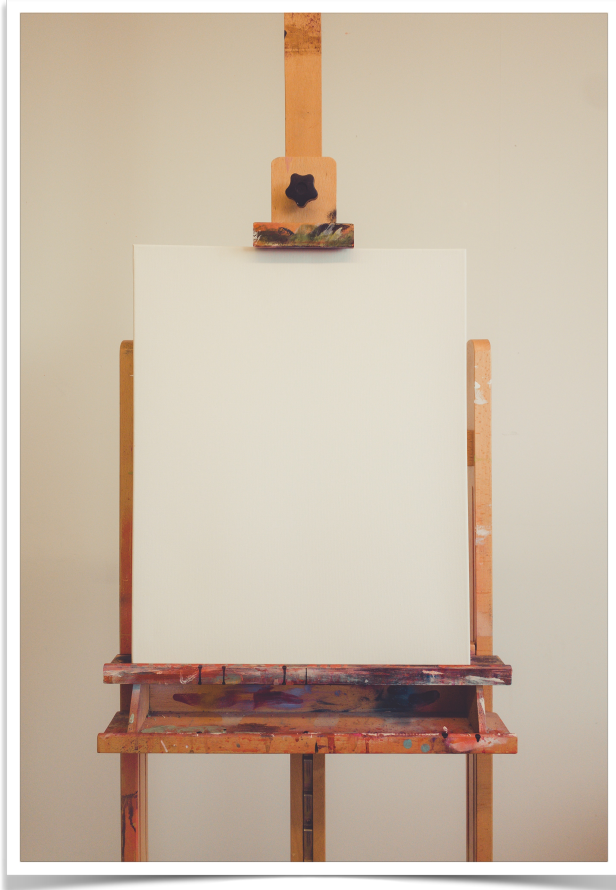
Action: When students see that their input is being taken seriously and acted upon, they are more likely to continue to participate in the decision-making process.

Lifelong Learning: Skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration. These skills are essential for success in today's world, and it helps to develop them.



STAPLE #4

Start Each Day With A Clean Slate



Often, it is difficult for teachers to release the feelings and emotions of a rough day with challenging students. A clean slate can ensure relationships are the focus rather than building hostility for previous wrongdoings. Three ways to clean the slate daily include:

1. Forgiveness – Forgiving allows us to be at peace with ourselves and those who wronged us.
2. Forget – Specifically, do not hold a grudge. Not forgiving = not forgetting.
3. Move On – Focus on the future and the opportunity for a positive change.

[Research Resource \[17.67.85\]](#)

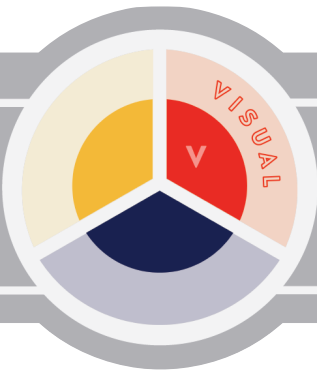
R.E.A.L. Education Connection

Relevance: Starting each day with a clean slate allows students to focus on the present and the day ahead rather than being bogged down by past mistakes or challenges. This can help make learning more relevant to their lives and interests.

Empathy: When students know that they can start fresh each day, they may be more likely to show empathy and understanding towards their peers who may be struggling.

Action: When students know that they have the opportunity to improve and grow each day, they may be more motivated to take action towards their goals and overcome challenges.

Lifelong Learning: When students adopt a growth mindset and focus on continuous improvement, they may be more likely to pursue lifelong learning and personal growth.



STAPLE #5

Model Expectations



Modeling expectations can give students practice developing the actions set in the learning environment. Students need to see and hear what is expected. Teachers need to communicate, be consistent, and connect with students when modeling expectations. Three tips for modeling include:

1. Clear Expectations – Communication of expectations must be clear for both students and the teacher.
2. Consistent Expectations – Consistency in expectations; avoid the “do as I say, not as I do” model.
3. Obtainable Expectations – Connect with students by ensuring expectations are within their capacity.

[Research Resource \[34,45\]](#)

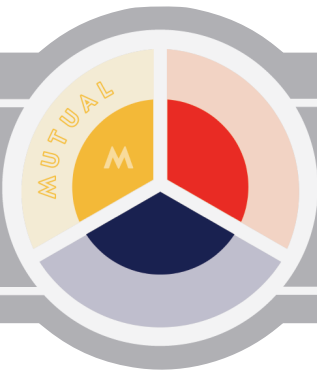
R.E.A.L. Education Connection

Relevance: Demonstrating real-world applications helps students see the importance and usefulness of what they're learning.

Empathy: Modeling respect and inclusivity helps students develop empathy and learn to interact with diverse people.

Action: Encouraging responsibility and positive contributions can inspire students to become active and engaged citizens.

Lifelong Learning: Teaching students to ask questions, analyze information, and reflect fosters intellectual curiosity and a love of learning that can last a lifetime.



STAPLE #6

Give 4:1 Positive vs Corrective Feedback



Positive feedback recognizes the desired behaviors that we communicate and model. Corrective feedback should focus on the desired behavior. Students will demonstrate behaviors given the most attention. Three tips to support a 4:1 ratio include:

1. Awareness – Become aware of the number of positive versus corrective statements you make.
2. The phrasing of Commands – Rephrase negative statements to the action you want to see. i.e “stop running” to “walk in the hallway”.
3. Increase Positive Comments – Start small and build up to the 4:1 ratio.

[Research Resource \[33,54,89\]](#)

R.E.A.L. Education



Connection

Relevance: Positive feedback reinforces the skills and behaviors students are doing well, motivating them to continue improving.

Empathy: Positive feedback shows that teachers care about their students and recognize their efforts, while corrective feedback is delivered in a supportive and constructive way.

Action: Positive feedback can help build confidence and motivation, while corrective feedback can help students identify areas for improvement and take action to address them.

Lifelong Learning: When teachers provide positive feedback, it can reinforce the joy and satisfaction of learning. When corrective feedback is given constructively, it can help students develop a growth mindset and a desire to continue improving.



STAPLE #7

Keep All Areas Clean & Organized



Keeping the classroom and surrounding areas clean and organized is essential for maintaining safety and structure. Modeling the procedures for daily tasks and routines, from washing hands to placing materials in the proper place, support important life skill transferability. Three tips for creating a clean and organized area include:

1. Set up a routine for daily cleaning/organizing.
2. Maximize the classroom structure (setup) to promote a safe environment.
3. Examine the classroom daily for areas that need attention.

Research Resource [21,79]

R.E.A.L. Education Connection

Relevance: A clean and organized classroom enhances relevance by providing a comfortable and distraction-free environment.

Empathy: Keeping the classroom clean and organized promotes empathy by creating a shared space that everyone can respect and appreciate.

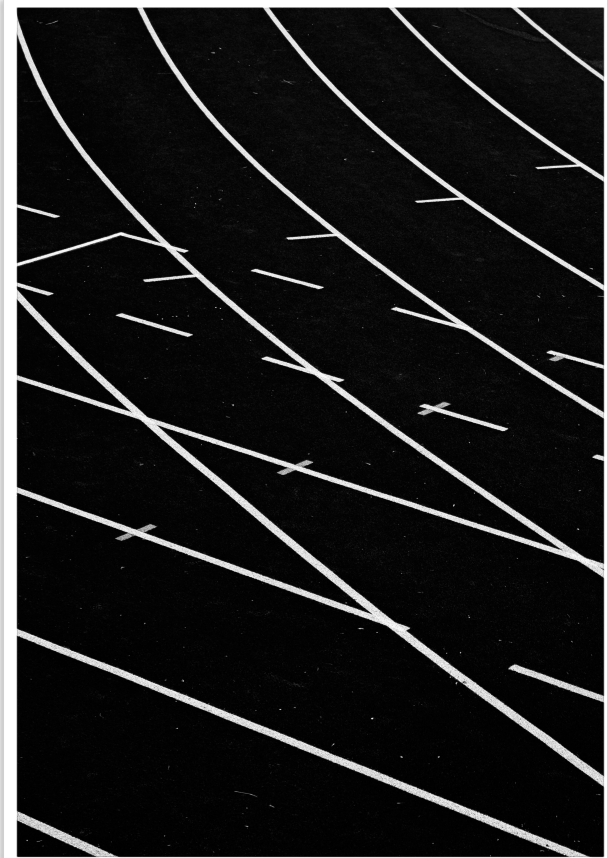
Action: A clean and organized classroom encourages students to take action and model responsibility and respect.

Lifelong Learning: A clean and organized classroom fosters a love of learning and a sense of ownership and responsibility that can translate to other areas of life.



STAPLE #8

Take Active Brain Breaks



Sitting down for long periods can be hard for attention and focus. Boosting our energy can help the brain to perform optimally through movement. Physical movement engages the brain and can improve concentration. Taking active brain breaks can help students regain focus during long instructional periods. Three ways to take active brain breaks instruction include:

1. Play a movement game (online).
2. Take a field trip outside to walk around.
3. Exercise in place.

Research Resource [14,24,53,80]

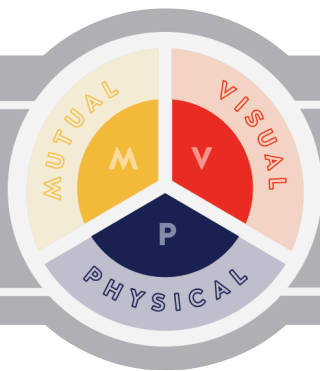
R.E.A.L. Education Connection

Relevance: When students are given a choice of brain break activities, they are more likely to be engaged and motivated to learn.

Empathy: When students engage in group activities, they develop a greater understanding and appreciation for their peers.

Action: When students are given regular breaks to be active, they are more likely to be focused and productive in the classroom.

Lifelong Learning: When students are encouraged to take breaks and prioritize their well-being, they develop habits that can support their ongoing learning and personal growth.



Closing S.T.A.P.L.E. Take Care of Yourself



Teaching is a calling. With teaching duties, responsibilities, and daily caring for many students, we sometimes forget to take care of ourselves. Taking care of yourself is a foundation for excellent teaching and learning. We must remember to focus on health and wellness through:

Sleep - Get at least 6-8 hours nightly.

Nutrition - Drink plenty of water and eat healthy foods, including fruit and vegetables.

Exercise - At least 30 minutes/daily.

Mindfulness/Meditation - Spend a few minutes each day in quiet time to reflect on the day and being grateful.

R.E.A.L. Education Connection

Relevance: When you take care of yourself, you prioritize your physical, mental, and emotional health enabling you to stay alert, focused, and engaged.

Empathy: When you prioritize self-care, you develop a better understanding of your own emotions, needs, and limitations. This understanding allows you to relate to others on a deeper level, and to appreciate their perspectives and experiences.

Action: When you care for yourself, you are better equipped to tackle challenges, solve problems, and act towards your goals.

Lifelong learning: Learning is a lifelong process that requires curiosity, motivation, and sustained effort. When you prioritize self-care, you cultivate these qualities by staying curious about yourself and the world around you, and by staying motivated to learn new things.