

Superintendent Update: January 18, 2018

Quote for the week: “Creativity is not the finding of a thing, but the making something out of it after it is found.”—James Russell Lowell

1. YOUR BRAIN DOES BETTER CREATIVE WORK WHEN YOU'RE TIRED

Unlike solving an analytic problem, creative insights come from [letting our minds wander](#) along tangents and into seemingly unrelated areas. Though many of us identify as [morning larks or night owls](#), peaking in our problem-solving skills and focus at particular times of the day, creative thinking [actually works better at non-optimal times](#). So, if you're a morning lark, your brain will be better at finding creative insights at night, when you're tired.

The reason behind this is that a tired brain [struggles to filter out distractions](#) and focus on one thing. It's also more likely to wander off on tangents. While that seems like a bad thing when you're working, creative thinking actually [benefits from distractions](#) and random thoughts. Research [has shown](#) that we're better at “thinking outside the box” at our [non-optimal times](#).

2. EXERCISE CAN IMPROVE YOUR CREATIVITY

We know [exercise is good for us](#) for lots of reasons, but here's one more. Studies have shown that [exercise can improve our ability to think creatively](#). When researchers had half the participants in a study perform an exercise video while the other half simply watched a video, those who had exercised outperformed the others in terms of divergent thinking—or, coming up with [more possible solutions to a problem](#).

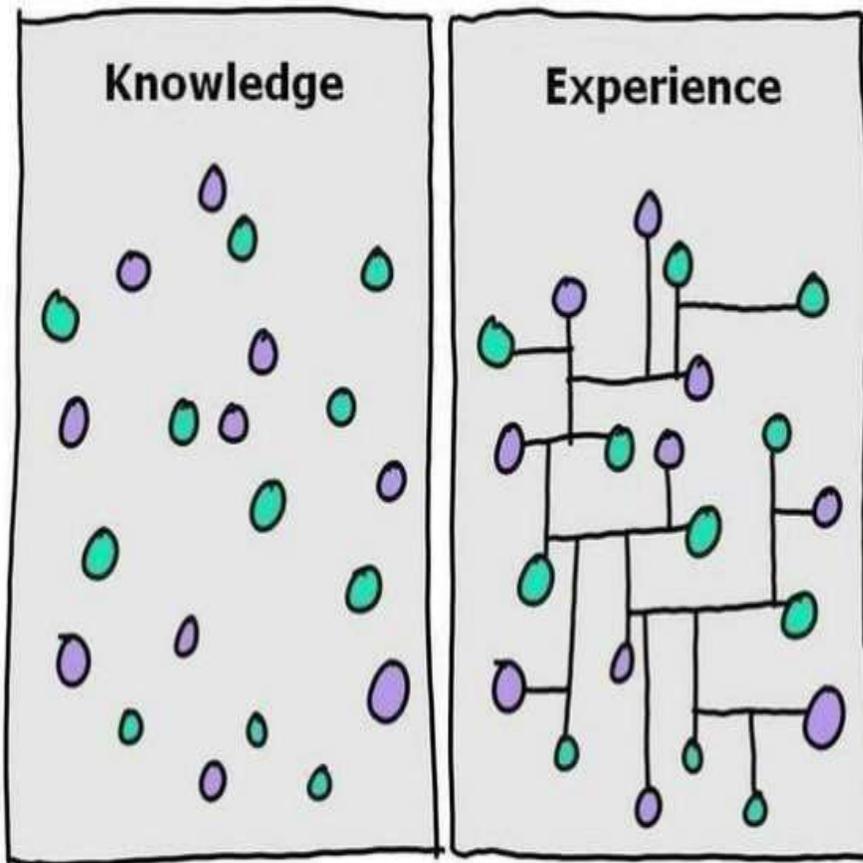
“Sweat is like WD-40 for your mind—it lubricates the rusty hinges of your brain and makes your thinking more fluid. Exercise allows your conscious mind to access fresh ideas that are buried in the subconscious.”

3. AMBIENT NOISE LEVELS ARE BEST FOR CREATIVITY

I actually thought silence might turn out to be the best sound for creative thinking, but it turns out that [ambient noise levels are just right](#). Unlike loud music or silence, [ambient noise levels have proven](#) to be perfect for improving creative thinking. Ambient noise would be like listening to the rain or music in an elevator.

Silence, in fact, actually helps us to [sharpen our focus](#), so it's useful for intense problem-solving or detail-oriented tasks. Creative thinking, on the other hand, requires the kind of ambient buzz of sound that you might find in a café to promote broader thinking and new ideas.

4. NOTHING IS ORIGINAL: CREATIVITY IS ALL ABOUT MAKING CONNECTIONS



I always thought creativity was about coming up with original ideas, but it turns out creativity is really just about **making new connections** between existing ideas. This is pretty exciting, because it means creativity suddenly seems less scary: we can all connect things that already exist, right?

Even Steve Jobs **agrees** with this theory of what creativity is all about:

“Creativity is just connecting things. When you ask creative people how they did something, they feel a little guilty because they didn’t really do it, they just saw something.”

Every artist gets asked the question, ‘Where do you get your ideas?’

The honest artist sometimes answers, I borrow them or saw it somewhere. Research has even **found** that intelligence is something that comes from physical connections in the brain:

5. TRAVELING ABROAD MIGHT IMPROVE YOUR CREATIVE THINKING

The research on this one is still small, but **one study** showed that for college students, those who travelled abroad scored higher on creative thinking tests than those who stayed at their main

campus. This particular study followed students who travelled from their college in the US to take part in a summer study program in England.

In many countries, cultural norms differ greatly between different states or areas, so it follows that we might see an increase in creativity from even interstate travel.

6. DIM LIGHTING MAKES US FEEL MORE FREE

I like a lot of natural light in my workspace, and I get quite frustrated in dark rooms when I need to focus. However, I was surprised to find [this research](#) that proved dim lighting can improve creative performance.

The researchers completed six different studies, which all showed that dim lighting increased creativity. They found that even without noticing a difference in visibility, if the lighting around them was dim, participants were likely to be more creative. The reasoning came from the subconscious [feeling of being more free to explore](#):

“...darkness elicits a feeling of being free from constraints and triggers a risky, explorative processing style.”

For times when you don't have control over the lighting around you, you can just [think about being in the dark](#) and it could have an effect:

“Other experiments found that merely priming the idea of darkness—such as by taking five minutes to describe an experience of literally being in the dark, and recalling how it felt—was sufficient to boost creativity.”

7. BLUE AND GREEN CAN IMPROVE YOUR PERFORMANCE ON CREATIVE TASKS

Color me surprised. Apparently a brief glimpse of [green can improve your creative performance!](#) Another [study](#) actually shows that seeing red or blue can have different effects on our cognitive performance: red helps us with detail-oriented tasks where we need to focus, [whereas blue enhances creative performance.](#)

This doesn't necessarily mean you'll want to paint everything blue or green, but it's a helpful tip to keep in mind when you're working on a creative project or switching between different types of work.

8. CONSTRAINTS CAN BE BENEFICIAL TO CREATIVE WORK

Another idea I had about creative thinking which was proved wrong is that freedom leads to more creative ideas. Counterintuitively, it turns out that constraints can actually increase our

creative output. This could be due to removing the overwhelm of having [too many choices](#). If you've ever faced the [hurdle of a blank page](#), you'll know what I mean.

Writer and actor [John Cleese describes creativity](#) as something that can be so elusive that one almost has to trap it using constraints.

"You have to create boundaries of space and then you have to create boundaries of time."

One of my favorite examples of amazing creativity coming out of constraints is an old story in which an author (often Ernest Hemingway, but the true author is debatable) bet his friends that he could write a whole story using just six words. Here's [the result](#):

"For sale: baby shoes, never worn"

9. A SEPARATE, MESSY DESK CAN IMPROVE YOUR CREATIVITY

I've never been a fan of having a messy desk, but I'm starting to think I might need to. [This research](#) proved that a messy environment leads to more creative thinking. It also encouraged participants subconsciously to be more drawn to new things than anything labeled as "classic."

The study also found that a more orderly environment led participants to be more generous and choose healthier snacks than those in the messy environment. Perhaps the answer is to have two work spaces.

10. BEING SLEEPY CAN MAKE YOU MORE CREATIVE

I don't know about you, but I've never felt especially ready to work when I'm still waking up. This period of coming out of sleep is called the [hypnopompic state](#). We often end up with strong visual images lingering from our dreams when we wake out of [REM \(Rapid Eye Movement\) sleep](#), when most of our dreaming happens. For this reason, lots of artists have coveted this just-waking-up period to improve their creative thinking.

Famous surrealist painter Salvador Dalí, was [known for using the hypnopompic state](#) to help him generate creative ideas. He would often nap in a chair, holding a spoon in his hand. Under the spoon, on the floor, was a tin plate. When he drifted off to sleep, he'd drop the spoon, and the clattering noise it made on the plate would wake him up, helping him to latch onto those vivid images that occur in our dreams.

There's a lot to think about, but changing one thing at a time about your process or working environment could eventually lead you to incorporating more creativity into your day.

News for the week:



Mulberry/Pleasant View School District

Congratulations to Mrs. Patterson our awesome cafeteria manager at Pleasant View. She was presented with the Biggest Heart Award by Dr. Myers and Mr. Fisher. We are so happy to have her taking care of our students with breakfast and lunch every day with a smile.



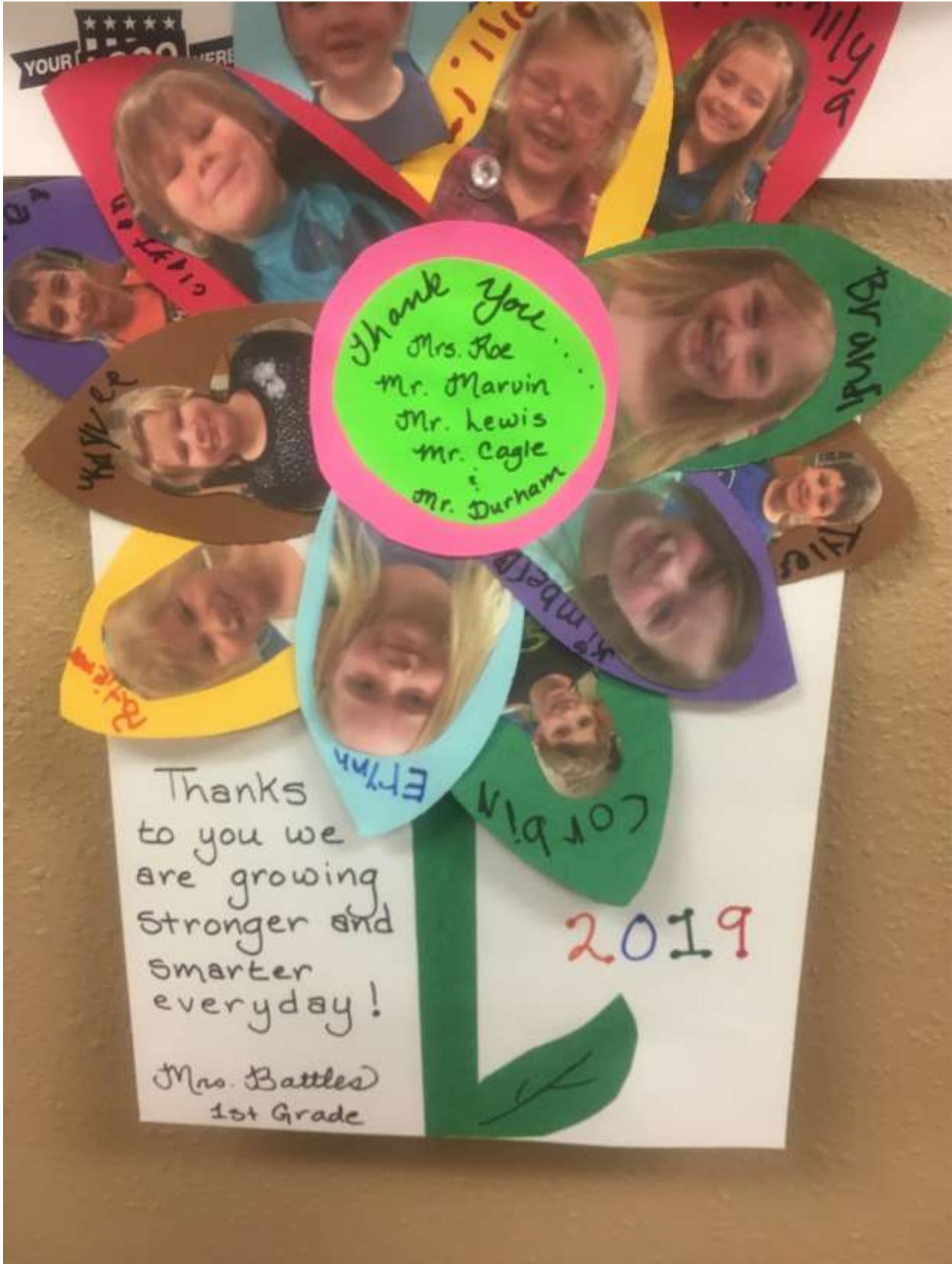


[Mulberry/Pleasant View School District](#)

Today we awarded our school counselor, Mrs. Morrison with the Teacher's Heart award. She goes above and beyond for all the students at MPV schools. Dr. Myers, Mr. Fisher, Mr. Williams, and Mrs. Sebastian all spoke about her dedication and big heart. We are so happy to have her at Mulberry Pleasant View Schools.







Mrs. Battles class presentation to school board.



[Brandon Fisher delivers a donation to the MPV Stinger Bots team.](#)

The “Biggest Loser” is on. Good luck everyone. It is a much greater challenge for me this year than last. I hope all of you that are participating are making it work!

Have a great weekend! Go Hornets and Go Jackets!