



The Inspired School Year Engagement Package

## Short Story Facilitation Guide

### WELCOME TO THE SHORT STORIES

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**Short Stories** are segments taken from Dewitt Jones' programs that focus on specific topics relevant to educators and the education field. These segments range from one to five minutes long, and should be used to invite discussion about specific topics.

They can be presented in any order and can be used as a stand-alone pieces or in conjunction with another training. Our recommendation is that you set aside 30 to 45 minutes each month to present a segment, answer the group questions, and complete the activity. Read through the materials before presenting them to your group so you can make it more specific to your school.

If you are unable to gather all participants in your school at one time or place, you can also recommend that individual teams or groups complete the training segment on their own.

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## Communication

# THANK YOU

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In every setting, good communication is critical to creating a positive, successful environment. Whether it's truly listening to what others have to say, understanding non-verbal cues, or feeling comfortable voicing your thoughts and opinions, communication between the principal and teachers, faculty and staff, teachers and students, teachers and parents, and every other combination is essential.

Another element of strong communication is showing gratitude to those around you. Showing

gratitude lets others know that what they do is important to you. It also helps others feel good about their work and achievements.

A recent study by the John Templeton Foundation found that people are the least likely to feel or express gratitude at work. Take a moment to think about that and consider your school. Do you express or feel gratitude? Expressing gratitude is a great way to increase morale, handle stressful situations, and lead to better communication.

## QUESTIONS

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1. What are other ways to express gratitude besides saying thank you?  
How often to you express gratitude to those around you?
2. How does it feel when people thank you, or you are recognized for something you did?  
Does this inspire you to continue doing good work?
3. How do you express gratitude to those around you everyday?
4. How does expressing gratitude help foster communication?



Activity:

## GRATITUDE LOG

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Perhaps some of you already keep a personal gratitude journal; but have you considered keeping a journal for your school, team, or classroom? All you need is a notebook and a few moments here and there.

- As a group, go around the room and ask each participant to identify something they are grateful for within your school. As people share, ask a volunteer to write it down. This can serve as a visual to remind people of what they said, and is a great way to boost morale and foster conversation about the importance of saying thank you.
- Encourage people to write down what they are grateful for, and to express gratitude to others. Keep a journal or notebook in a central location and encourage participants to add to it regularly. This can be used with the faculty and staff and kept in the main office, within a team or pod, or even within a classroom. Find a dedicated time once a week or even once a month to go through it and read new entries to the group. Consider creating your own ritual around the gratitude log.



## Creativity

### **MORE THAN ONE RIGHT ANSWER**

Why is it important to find more than one right answer? How can it help you and your school?

Creativity is such an important part of your work. Whether you're working with students, other educators, or anyone else you may come into contact with, there are multiple times when a creative solution is essential! Whether it's a scheduling challenge, helping a student find a way to learn that works best for them, or dealing with budget restrictions, creative answers to difficult problems are constantly needed.

Sometimes your first answer is the best one. Sometimes, it isn't. It is worth the time and energy to consider multiple solutions. This ensures that you are providing yourself and your school with the best possible options to create success. Another important element of more than one right answer is being open to others' ideas

and opinions as well. Even if the idea does not coincide with your own or you disagree, at least take a moment to consider it and the other person's point of view..

While most people ultimately understand the value in finding more than one right answer, making it happen is another story.

**So, how can you creatively find the next right answer?**

- Change your attitude and view problems as a chance to exercise your creativity.
- Collaborate with others on your team, and outside of your usual scope to get fresh input.
- Be open to all ideas - it's worth considering every option.

### **QUESTIONS**

1. How can you find new answers if you don't find yourself creative?
2. Who can you rely on to help you find creative answers?  
Make a list of people you can turn to when trying to find a creative solution.
3. What is the biggest challenge you are currently dealing with?  
Can you change your attitude and view it as an opportunity?
4. Changing a camera lens is easy. Changing your perspective and using different viewpoints is more challenging. What difficulties do you anticipate, and how can you overcome these?  
Have a discussion or write it down.
5. Do you feel that creativity is supported in your school? Why or why not?  
What steps can be taken to make it more open to creativity and new ideas?



Activity:

## THE PENCIL EXERCISE

This exercise illustrates our ability to ride the possibility curve and discover more opportunities.

### Instructions

- Have everyone break into small groups of 6 - 8. Encourage groups of people that usually do not interact together.
- Ask everyone to take out a pen and piece of paper. Show the group a pencil. Ask them to jot down as many uses for the pencil and they can. Give them two minutes.
- After two minutes have everyone count up their number of uses. Have them share their list with those in their small group.
- After a few minute ask everyone to raise their hands if anyone came up with 20 ideas? 15 ideas? 10? 5? Generally, the number of "uses" will be less than 10 and will focus on using the pencil as a writing instrument.
- Remind everyone that there were no rules that the pencil had to be used for writing. Encourage them to think other uses. Offer suggestions such as a drumstick, a swizzle stick, a balloon popper, etc.
- Have them spend another 2 minutes writing new possibilities. Encourage participants to include anything they heard, and build on those ideas.
- After 2 minutes, have them count up their list and share with their small group.
- Again ask everyone raise their hands for 20, 15, 10 and 5 ideas. Ask people to share some of the uses they came up with.
- Explain: We can see that as we open up to possibilities new ideas can emerge. We are going to do this one more time. This time we have one additional rule. You cannot lift your pencil from the paper, you must keep writing for the entire time. Do not filter your thoughts, simply write whatever comes to mind. No idea is bad.
- After 2 minutes have the small groups get together to share. There will be a lot of laughter. Let them have fun for a few minutes.
- As a large group, have people add up the total number of uses they discovered in the 3 timed sessions. Go through the raising hands drill again. Most people should raise their hands at 20. Ask them to share some of the more "interesting" ideas. Have fun with this.
- Explain: This is a simple exercise that reminds us that we all have the potential to find possibilities. By opening our mind, and being ready to hear the ideas of others, we can go beyond our first right answer and find many possibilities.
- As a group, identify at least 5 reasons that seeing possibilities can make personal interactions with peers, administration, students and parents more positive.
- Finally, with the lessons from this exercise identify at least 3 behaviors everyone can agree to practice to create a school of possibilities.



## Vision and Leadership

### **DON'T BE AFRAID TO PUSH YOUR EDGE**

There are many types of leaders. And different types of organizations require different types of leaders. One common thread; however, is that every school needs a vision to provide direction and guidance. When you have a strong vision, you can make sure your school is moving in the right direction.

In an educational setting, deans, principals, and those in the highest positions need to have a strong vision to guide their institution and ensure it is successful. Professors, teachers, and educators of all kinds need a vision to help their students do their best and provide positive leadership.

Sometimes achieving your vision or goal can involve taking risks for the good of the teachers and students. Many of us are afraid of taking risks and trying new things.

By opening yourself up to new ideas and possibilities, stepping out of your comfort zone, you may be surprised with the results.

This might include applying for grants, finding new resources, considering new teaching methodologies, etc. You may find even more success and grow as a leader in education.

### **QUESTIONS**

1. How do you feel about taking responsible risks to help accomplish your goal? Can you recall an instance when you've done this? Please elaborate.
2. Have you ever abandoned a project or goal because you were not comfortable taking the risks you needed to get there?
3. In your opinion, what differentiates a reckless risk versus a responsible risk?
4. Have you ever taken a risk that proved to be unsuccessful? What happened? Did this deter you from taking another risk?
5. Is it appropriate to take reasonable risks when students are involved? Please discuss or write down your thoughts.



Activity:

## **IMPROVEMENT AND RISK**

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As a group, make an honest list of a few challenges or issues in your school that you would like to see changed or modified. Then, take a few minutes to determine which item on the list you want to discuss as a group.

Next, consider what steps you can take to help improve that issue. Could creative problem solving help? What risks might need to be taken to see improvement? What might happen if the problem is solved? What might happen if it isn't?

Make a list of specific tasks that need to happen in order to make a positive change.

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Not to be used in training



## Trust

### TRUST YOUR INTUITION

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Trust is a critical component in every successful school. We need to trust the leadership, our colleagues, the parents, the students, and everyone else who plays a part in the community. We also need to remember to trust ourselves.

By trusting ourselves and our intuition, we allow ourselves to make the best possible decisions. If we learn to trust it, our intuition can reveal spectacular visions.

We all have it - that small voice that for an inexplicable reason, has convinced us to do something or be somewhere. More than understanding the facts, trusting your intuition means that you have faith in yourself and your abilities. And the more we trust our intuition, the more it will speak to us.

### QUESTIONS

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1. What is the difference between following your intellect and following your intuition?
2. Make a list of why learning to listen to your intuition is important. How is this relevant with those you work with? Those you teach? Those you lead? What about the other way around?
3. How can you learn to trust and listen to your intuition? Why can this be challenging?
4. Have you ever experienced a time when your intuition went against all that you knew or believed? What happened?

Activity:

## SENSING VS. INTUITION

Perception is the lens you use to absorb information. There are two types of perception: sensing and intuition.

Ask your participants to study this picture for a minute, and then spend about five minutes writing down what they see.



Go around the room and ask everyone to list one or two things they've written down. Discuss whether these answers are derived from sensing or from intuition.

- When someone prefers sensing, they look at the facts and use the five senses to gather information.
- When someone prefers intuition, they use one or two details to create a perception about things that aren't actually there.

There are no wrong answers. What you will discover in this exercise is that while everyone uses both sensing and intuition, most people do have a strong preference.

When you have an understanding of your preference, it can be used as a tool to assess your choices and decisions. It can also be used as a tool for communicating with others and accepting that others may not always see or interpret things as you do.



## Character

### **BE WILLING TO BE THE BEST FOR THE WORLD**

By demonstrating good character, we serve as a role model to those we serve. Good character traits are easily identified, but so are less desirable ones. Positive character traits are the ones that draw us to other people and help us connect with those around us; a very important piece of developing a school community that wants to strengthen and grow. And it is very true that actions speak louder than words.

All of us have numerous positive character traits; yet, every single one of us also has areas we can improve. Sometimes, these traits need to be learned and practiced in order to incorporate them into our life and work.

One character trait Dewitt Jones discusses is the idea of being your best for the world. This is not an easy transition, and for many of us, it may be unnatural. When we concentrate on being the best in the world, this is a more materialistic viewpoint; however, when we concentrate on being the best for the world, we approach our tasks with service and grace. Being the best for the world means putting all of your energy and good intentions out there, and expecting nothing in return. The reward is the action, not the recognition. This simple shift of attitude can build community, and reminds us to act in the best interest of those around us.

### **QUESTIONS**

1. Being your best for the world suggests an attitude of service. Does this mean that results are not important?
2. How can you balance being your best for the world with results?
3. Make a list of character traits that are important in your setting. Do you have all of these traits? How can you work to incorporate more of them into your work?
4. Have you ever worked with someone who continually strived to be the best in the world? What kind of difference did they make in their school or organization?



Activity:

## SIX PILLARS OF CHARACTER

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### Supplies needed:

*Multiple copies of the graph (enough for each group) and colored markers.*

Creating a culture of good character requires an ongoing effort. It requires honesty and a willingness to put yourself out there with no guarantee that your efforts will be noticed or rewarded.

**The Six Pillars of Character** offer a good baseline to explore values. Developed by the Josephson Institute of Ethics, the six pillars offer fundamental standards of behavior that are applicable to everyone.

### **The Six Pillars of Character are:**

- Trustworthiness
- Respect
- Responsibility
- Fairness
- Caring
- Citizenship

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1. Break into small groups of 6 - 8 people.
  2. Hand out to each group the sheet that defines the six characteristics and the graph. Give each group a few minutes to read about the six characteristics talk about what they represent.
  3. Using the color that corresponds with the trait, mark where on the chart you believe each of these traits fall.
  4. When finished, examine the graph. What trends do you see? Write them down.
  5. Get together as a large group and share findings.
  6. Take a few minutes to celebrate all good news that is identified. Brainstorm to identify at least 3 actions (behaviors) that will help maintain the positive character behaviors.
  7. As a large group, identify the problem areas and explore why that is the case. (Note: Be sure to explore where a low ranking is based on the behaviors of the majority of the few. Sometimes low ratings are not based on the normal interactions, but are instead from a few problem students/faculty members. If based on only a few problem people, readjust the chart and continue).
  8. Brainstorm ways to improve. Write down all thoughts. Narrow down the ideas to five achievable actions.
  9. Share with everyone what was agreed upon; the three action items to maintain positive character behaviors, and the five action items to improve daily interactions within the school.
  10. Celebrate a job well done!

**To learn more about The Six Pillars of Character, please visit:**

[www.educationworld.com/a\\_admin/admin/admin364.shtml](http://www.educationworld.com/a_admin/admin/admin364.shtml)

Activity:

## SIX PILLARS OF CHARACTER (GRAPH)



CHARACTER	COLOR	DESCRIPTION
TRUSTWORTHINESS	Blue: Think True Blue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be honest</li> <li>• Don't deceive, cheat or steal</li> <li>• Be reliable—do what you say you'll do</li> <li>• Have the courage to do the right thing</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build a good reputation</li> <li>• Be loyal—stand by your family, friends and country</li> </ul>
RESPECT	Yellow/Gold: Think the Golden Rule	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Treat others with respect; follow the Golden Rule</li> <li>• Be tolerant of differences</li> <li>• Use good manners, not bad language</li> <li>• Be considerate of the feelings of others</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Don't threaten, hit or hurt anyone</li> <li>• Deal peacefully with anger, insults and disagreements</li> </ul>
RESPONSIBILITY	Green: Think being responsible for a garden of finances; or as in being solid and reliable like an oak	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do what you are supposed to do</li> <li>• Persevere: keep on trying!</li> <li>• Always do your best</li> <li>• Use self-control</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be self-disciplined</li> <li>• Think before you act—consider the consequences</li> <li>• Be accountable for your choices</li> </ul>
FAIRNESS	Orange: Think of dividing an orange into equal sections to share fairly with friends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Play by the rules</li> <li>• Take turns and share</li> <li>• Be open-minded; listen to others</li> <li>• Don't blame others carelessly</li> </ul>
CARING	Red: Think of a heart	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be kind</li> <li>• Be compassionate and show you care</li> <li>• Express gratitude</li> <li>• Forgive others</li> <li>• Help people in need</li> </ul>
CITIZENSHIP	Purple: Think regal purple as representing the state	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do your share to make your school and community better</li> <li>• Cooperate</li> <li>• Get involved in community affairs</li> <li>• Stay informed; vote</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be a good neighbor</li> <li>• Obey laws and rules</li> <li>• Respect authorities</li> <li>• Protect the environment</li> </ul>



## Inclusiveness

### BRING IT ON

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In **Bring It On**, Dewitt Jones helps us understand that our situation really is what we make it. When we fill ourselves with hope and try to find all of the possibilities out there, challenges aren't as daunting.

This mindset can be applied to so many topics within our schools, but especially inclusiveness.

Inclusiveness in education is a frequently discussed, sometimes controversial topic that every school must deal with in some capacity or another. At the highest level, being an inclusive school means welcoming all

students, regardless of need, into our schools. It also means designing programs, systems, and activities so everyone can learn together. Inclusiveness is a critical step in valuing diversity. By welcoming diversity, but also by understanding we are all more alike than different, we can build a stronger school and do our best to serve all students.

### QUESTIONS

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1. How do you want to be treated? How do you treat others? How do you treat others who may have different or special needs? Is this the same or different for everyone?
2. What is being done in your school to support teachers who have students with diverse needs in the classroom?
3. How can diversity foster creative thinking and problem solving?



Activity:

## **MORE ALIKE THAN DIFFERENT**

It is easy to focus on what sets us apart, but the reality is that we are all more alike than different. This exercise reminds everyone that by focusing on our shared values and ideals, we can find a common ground and build meaningful relationships.

Before beginning the exercise, get several large sheets of paper or access to multiple whiteboards, printed handouts of questions, marker, Post-it® notes.

1. Ask everyone to break into small groups of 4-6 people; give each person a list of questions and Post-it® notes; each group should have a whiteboard or large writing surface.
2. Have each group draw a large circle on the large sheet of paper (You can also print the provided handout if you have a large sheet printer).
3. On the Post-it® notes have people answer the 5 questions provided. Ask them to identify at least five answers for each question. Give them 5 – 10 minutes.
4. Ask the groups to share their answers. Give them several minutes to discuss.
5. Now have the groups apply the Post-it®-notes to their large sheet in the following manner:
  - a. If the group agrees that the answer is desirable, place it in the circle.
  - b. If not everyone agrees, place Post-it®-note outside the circle.
  - c. Allow at least 10 minutes for the discussion.
6. Have each small group present their sheet and share what they discovered in the process.
7. As a large group, brainstorm on why focusing on our common interests can help daily interactions.
8. As a large group explore why, with so many similarities, our differences are important and vital. Create a list of at least 10.
9. As a group, identify at least 5 behaviors or practices everyone can apply from this exercise. The list should include ways to share what people have in common and ways to leverage their differences.
10. Share the list with everyone.

Activity:

**MORE ALIKE THAN DIFFERENT (CIRCLE)**

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Not to be used in training

**QUESTIONS**

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1. How do you want to be treated by others?
2. Why did you choose a career in education?
3. What makes you happy?
4. What frustrates you?
5. How do you want to be remembered?



## Motivation

# THE POSSIBILITY CURVE

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In **The Possibility Curve**, Dewitt Jones discusses the importance of different perspectives in photography. In photography, change means possibility, and the times of most change hold the most potential for success. In every industry and every organization, change happens, and we usually can't control it; yet, we can use the power of change and learn how to ride it, and use it to our benefit.

It takes a shift in perspective to view change as possibility. Change can seem threatening, while possibility is more closely aligned with opportunities.

As educators, we face change constantly. New students, new curriculum, new standards and testing, new methodologies. And certainly they can be daunting. However, in many instances, these changes are out of our control. Instead of complaining about them and resisting the changes, we can do our best to shift our outlook and find opportunities in even the most difficult situations.

## QUESTIONS

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1. How do you feel about change? How do your colleagues feel about change?
2. How can you shift your perspective and view change as possibility? Is this possible for every change? What benefit might there be to shifting to this outlook?
3. Take a moment to consider a time when your school went through a large change. What were the initial responses? What was the outcome?
4. Have you ever fundamentally disagreed with a change within your school? Were you able to voice your opinion? What was the end result?



Activity:

## MOTIVATION BOARD

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### Supplies needed:

*One piece of thick paper (tag board or oaktag paper is best). Multiple magazines, glue or tape, markers.*

We all know that motivation is important, yet sometimes, it's hard to find and incorporate it into our daily lives. Perhaps we've gotten into a rut with our lesson plans or our leadership techniques. This exercise will help us find our creativity and generate new, creative ideas.

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- Give each participant a piece of paper, a few magazines, scissors, and tape or glue, and markers.
- Ask them to build a motivation board. They can use images and words they find in the magazines to express what they would like to incorporate into their roles. They can also write ideas down if they can't find the appropriate picture. Give them 15-20 minutes to create their board.
- After about 20 minutes, ask each participant to share their board with the group (if time is limited, they can do this in small groups). Encourage them to place the board somewhere they can see it, and draw new ideas and inspiration from the board as needed.



## Improvement vs. Recognition

### **DON'T PROVE, IMPROVE**

When Dewitt Jones was 26 years old, his boss at the time taught him a very important lesson: Don't Prove, Improve! Don't spend your time worrying about constantly proving yourself. Instead, spend your time improving yourself, and being the best you can be! Focus on doing things better today than yesterday.

This is an important lesson for educators as well! By focusing on improving yourself and what you do, whether it is becoming a better administrator, educator, counselor, coach, etc., your entire community will benefit.

We all want our schools, teachers, and parents to be recognized. It would be remiss to say that recognition, whether in the form of awards, test scores, number of students going to college, candidates for teacher of the year, etc. isn't important and a wonderful form of recognition. But it's not why we became educators, and if the only goal is this type of recognition, we are trying to prove rather than improve. In many circumstances, when we work our hardest to improve, positive recognition will then follow.

By focusing on improving, by sharing what you learn, and by helping others, we can all improve together.

### **QUESTIONS**

1. What is the difference between proving and improving?
2. Do we require our staff and our students to prove - or improve?  
Is there a time and a place for both? Please discuss or write down your thoughts.
3. How can improving yourself trickle down and positively affect others?  
Do you believe in this idea? Why or why not?



Activity:

## **IMPROVEMENT CAN LEAD TO RECOGNITION**

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1. Invite someone in the group to be the recorder, and write everything down on the whiteboard or screen for all to see.
2. As a group, make a list of all the attributes that go along with recognition (examples: *prestige, funding, enrollment*).
3. Next, make a list of all the attributes that go along with improvement (examples: *learning, discovery, growth*).
4. Have a discussion about why both are important, and if people believe one is more important than the other.
5. If it does not happen organically, shift the discussion to focus on how improvement can actually help lead to recognition.



## Connections

### **LEARN TO FALL IN LOVE WITH WHAT YOU DO**

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Creating connections with others in our schools is such an important part of what we do. Without these connections, it would be very difficult to find support in difficult times, ideas for working with students and parents, new lesson plans, new inspiration, and so many critical elements of our jobs. By making these connections, we can literally fall in love with what we do.

Working in a school is hard. There's a lot of pressure to succeed, and a lot of challenges and problems that need to be solved. By having these connections, it can be easier to find solutions. By falling in love with what we do, what we're teaching, who we're leading, and the fundamental purpose of why we come to work everyday, we can make a real difference in the lives of others.

### **QUESTIONS**

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1. What does Dewitt mean when he says to fall in love with what you do?
2. Why were you initially drawn into the field of education? Does that reason stand today? Why do you continue to work in education, and have you ever fallen in love with what you do?
3. Have you made connections within your school? If yes, how have they helped you succeed? If no, do you believe that making connections might help you in your role?



Activity:

## **PASSION AND CONNECTIONS**

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- Ask all participants to make a broad list of everything they love, and everything they are passionate about. It should include elements from school, but not be exclusive only to school or education.
- After a few minutes, break the group into a few smaller groups (three to four people per group is ideal).
- Ask everyone in their small group to share their list with others, and then have a discussion about how their passions and interests can help them connect at school. If some are unable to connect their passion to their roles within the school, work together to help find a way to bring their passion into their work.

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Not to be used in training



## Passion

### JUICE

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In Dewitt Jones' program **Juice**, we are reminded that inspiration can come from anywhere, that determination and focus come with practice, and passion gives us the power to fulfill our dreams.

We hear about passion all the time. It's essentially a buzz-word in today's society, yet it really is a critical piece in achieving our goals. It is so important to understand how fueling your passion can make a huge difference in our communities.

In **Juice**, five-year-old Adam's passion in the story is literally his juice. This serves as the perfect metaphor, because the juice in the toy camera represents the passion and energy we all need in our lives.

For some of us, it is as obvious as the juice in our camera. We know what we want for our school, and we have a clear plan to get there! For others, it may not be as obvious. We have to do a little searching to find our juice, our passion, our energy.

Working in education is hard, sometimes thankless, and sometimes routine. By reconnecting with our passion, what we love about our roles and about our field, we can find the energy to do our best, every day.

### QUESTIONS

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1. Ask yourself the question, "Does my camera have juice in it?"  
If the answer is yes, how can you harness that passion and incorporate it into your everyday life? If the answer is no, how can you find it? Did you once have it? If so, where did it go?
2. What or who in your life has inspired you? Consider even the most unlikely places.
3. What are you passionate about outside of education? Is it possible to incorporate that into your role in education? If not, how can you find that same energy in your work?



Activity:

## PRACTICING OUR SKILLS

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Determination and focus aren't automatic. We need to practice our skills and rely on what drives us to succeed.

- Break into small groups of about five people.
- As a group, make a list of well-known, high-achievers—athletes, musicians, scientists, writers, etc. Come up with a comprehensive list from a multitude of industries and specialties.

### High-Achievers:

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- |    |     |
|----|-----|
| 1. | 6.  |
| 2. | 7.  |
| 3. | 8.  |
| 4. | 9.  |
| 5. | 10. |
- 

- Once you have this list, answer whether or not you think their talent/specialty comes naturally, is practiced, or a combination of both.
- Next, write down what steps you think they may need to take to practice their abilities. How often do they practice? What might be their inspiration? How might these activities help you? Be creative!
- Then reflect on your own work. What skills do you need to succeed? Are they intuitive, do they need practice, or a combination of both? Have a discussion within your small group of the ways you can best improve your own skills.