

Ty Ankrom's Here's What I Think ...

February may be the shortest month on the calendar but in Ohio, it can feel as if it drags on forever.

Sandwiched between the month after educators return from the winter break and at least six weeks before spring break, it can leave even the most dedicated among us with a case of the winter doldrums.

As we can't all jet off to a warmer climate and relax on a beach, perhaps some tips collected by the ASCD for an article in *Education Update* from fellow educators lauded as 2017 State and National Teachers of the Year will help us recharge.

Teachers are constantly busy but Sydney Chaffee, the 2017 National Teacher of the Year, said it's important for educators to make time to connect with each other.

"Reach out to people you trust in your building. Invite them into your classroom and go into theirs — it can inspire you," she said in the article.

Other tips from Chaffee:

It's common for teachers to teach the same subjects or topics the same way every year. Don't, she says. Be willing to try something different. By changing the lesson plan, it can invigorate students and reinvigorate the teacher.

Also, remember that just as you are a teacher, you are also a student. Take steps to learn periodically through the year just as you may during summer break.

Chaffee says it doesn't have to be a formal class.



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Teachers can read a book or watch a documentary about a topic that they're teaching. Or, they can refer to Chaffee's first tips and create a peer group "to share new ideas and workshop things together."

In a similar vein, Shelly Vroegh, the 2017 Iowa Teacher of the Year, encourages teachers to be aware of that one colleague who can inspire you when you've hit a wall. And be willing to be that source of inspiration for another colleague.

Close to home is a suggestion from Chillicothe High School Principal Dustin Weaver, the 2017 Ohio Teacher of the Year.



Weaver's restart button is activated when he reviews e-mails, thank you notes and artwork given to him by students, parents and community members. Weaver said those items help energize him.

2017 National Teacher of the Year finalist Megan Gross from California reminds peers to get satisfaction from reviewing what you've accomplished so far this year and "celebrate the tiny successes that are going to lead up to where you want to be in May or June," she said in the article.

Above all, find time in your day, week and life to release the stress that comes from your job. Gross recommends getting outside — alone or with your family — to recharge.

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