



Refresh, Research, and Renew

By Becky Ramsey, Public School Representative

We Need a Break

As a teacher, I always look forward to the summer break. However, I must hide that anticipation from my students. Their words and actions show they are looking forward to summer fun with great expectation as well. I am looking forward to a time to refresh, research, and renew because after a year of teaching, I also need this time of summer break as much as my students.

Refresh

During the school year, I program my phone to keep me on schedule: a signal for the time to get up; a five-minute warning that I need to be leaving the house; a five-minute warning that I need to be present at morning hall duty; one warning for the time to close the breakfast line at school and hustle children toward their classroom and then start my day of teaching. In contrast, the first thing I do as I leave my school at the end of the semester is to breathe easy as I turn off all my morning alarms. One step of refreshment for my soul in the summer is to know that every day does not have to begin with that regimentation of my time. Oh, I will have to set alarms in the summer for different activities but not for each day.

Unscheduled time leaves spots for working in my garden, sitting on the deck with an extra cup of coffee, going to the gym, and the list goes on. Having a relaxed schedule is always a time of refreshment for me.

I am sure other teachers enjoy selecting activities that will bring refreshment to the body, mind, and soul too. I reflect on God's promise found in Jeremiah 31:25 (NIV): "I will refresh the weary and satisfy the faint."

Research

I also look forward to doing research during my summer break. As a gifted student specialist, I must find my own materials to use rather than having a specific curriculum to follow. I use what the testing shows are my students' developing skills to drive my instruction. Therefore, I am always looking for new ways to teach different concepts that my students are now ready to learn.

Summer gives me more time to research different educational sites, read works from different authors whom I think my students may find interesting, create some new gameboards, and expand my present collections of learning activities. Another form of research I love is to find new field trip sites. I am required to plan a field trip for each of the four quarters that will offer educational challenges and rewards for the extra effort my students are investing in their education. I want these trips to be fresh and different each year. To accomplish that goal, I plan to take my grandchildren to some of these new locations I have researched to see if the places offer experiences to benefit my students. This research offers a time of refreshment as well as opportunities to spend time with my grandchildren. Ecclesiastes 3:1-7 (NIV) talks about many of these activities: "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens...a time to plant, ...a time to heal,...a time to laugh,...a time to [re]search,...a time to mend..." Thank you, Lord, for these refreshing times in the life of this tired teacher!

Renew

To me, the greatest blessing that summer brings into my life is the time to RENEW! I want to renew my covenant with the Lord to do His will. I never want my teaching to be just a way to earn my living. I want my life as a teacher to be a way to please and do the will of the One who has called me. Yes, I sign a contract, but that contract is not nearly as significant as the covenant that I have with my Lord to do what He has asked me to do—touch lives for Him. I have been blessed to keep that covenant in public schools, Christian schools, and community charter schools. Regardless of where I am, I want to be a shining light. This time of renewal helps me to recharge the battery in my soul to keep that light going and shining brighter until the Lord releases me to a new calling.

My renewal does come from the time of refreshment as well as the time spent researching for new materials and experiences to share. Primarily, my renewal comes from the extra time I must be in God's Word while also listening carefully for the direction of His Holy Spirit. That extra cup of coffee on the deck is more refreshing when I am renewing my soul in His Word at the same time. Spending time in prayer for direction helps me in my search for new and interesting lessons. Yet the greatest blessing is that the summer allows me extra time to seek to be more like Him, letting His Spirit to flow in my life. A verse on a picture in my living room promises: "But those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint" (Isaiah 40:31, NIV).

The greatest promise for any teacher at the end of the school year is that the Lord will renew us. We will begin to run and not drag through the day. The Lord will keep us from fainting in our walk of life. My hope for renewal does not come with days off. It comes from days with a special, set-aside time with my Savior.

Three Reasons to Continue Teaching

Many teachers have at least three reasons to continue teaching—June, July, and August. Since my first day back in the next academic year is August 1, one would think I have only two reasons—June and July. However, my third reason to continue in my calling is my time to refresh, research, and renew my covenant with the One who gives me the strength to teach.

Becky Ramsey is from Gahanna, Ohio. She has taught in public and Christian schools. She currently serves as a reading and math intervention specialist at a local charter school. You may contact Becky at ramseyfamily2771@gmail.com.