

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Heather Kardeen, OAGC President

As I write this, I am only a couple of weeks into summer break. I've spent this time vacationing, relaxing, reading and catching up on house projects. By the time you read this, we will all be into the beginning of a new school year. I've always felt the beginning of the school year is an exciting time - new school supplies, students in the halls, bright polished floors, new school supplies, fresh starts, new ideas for lessons, and oh yeah, new school supplies (the real reason I became a teacher).

While the new school year is an exciting time for most of us, it can also come with some unknowns for us and our gifted students (I don't even need to mention over excitabilities and anxiety). What will my students or teacher be like? Will they or s/he like me? Is this school year going to be a successful one? A new school year comes with transitions and changes which can be unsettling for those of us who like routine; it causes us to give up some control. How can we help to make the transition into a new school year comfortable and less scary for us and our gifted students?

Embrace new opportunities. None of us went into the world of gifted knowing everything there was to know. A new school year or a new position gives us the opportunity to learn, grow and be better for our gifted students. Change can translate to possibility if we are willing to embrace it.

Take time to reflect. What has worked well for you (or your students) in the past when you're faced with uncertainty? Talking about it with someone? Taking a break to be by yourself to think and clear your head? Cultivate self-awareness and use those strategies which have worked for you in the past.

Maintain normalcy, comfort, and practice self-care. Anxiety and stress which often surround change can affect our bodies and emotional state. Structure and routine can be comforting. Go for your usual walks, visit the same coffee shop you frequented in the summer, stick to a normal sleeping, waking and eating time (difficult during the school day, I know). Incorporate stress-relieving and enjoyable activities in your day - listen to relaxing music in the classroom,



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journal, meditate, exercise. A healthy, balanced body will be better equipped to handle the ups and downs of change and transitions.

Celebrate the positives. Seeing the positive aspects of a situation might not be obvious at first, but it's worth seeking them out. Did I use personal attributes to turn change into a positive? Was I patient? Was I rational? Did I help others even while I was overwhelmed with my own uncertainty? It may seem Pollyanna-ish to put on a positive face during times of change and transition, but having a growth mindset can soften the impact and stress of those times. As Maya Angelou said, "If you don't like something, change it. If you can't change it, change your attitude."

As this new school year begins, I ask you to embrace the change and the roller coaster ride change brings. Take care of yourself so you can be strong to be the support your gifted students need. I wish you a positive start to the school year, break out those new school supplies and I hope to see you all at the OAGC Annual Fall Conference in October.