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CENTER OF EXCELLENCE IN  
LEADERSHIP OF LEARNING

UNIVERSITY OF INDIANAPOLIS



# INDIANA TEACHER OF THE YEAR WE CAN DO HARD THINGS: RIGOR THROUGH RELATIONSHIPS

## Presenters:

**Tara Cocanower**

2023 Indiana Teacher of the Year  
Bluffton High School

**Eric Jenkins**

2024 Indiana Teacher of the Year  
Franklin Community High School

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 @cocotheexplorer23



 @jenkinsverse

Rigor Through Relationships

WE CAN DO  
HARD THINGS

AND SO CAN OUR  
STUDENTS



Tara Cocanower



Eric Jenkins





Courage is not  
simply one of the  
virtues, but the  
form of every virtue  
at the *testing point*.

— C. S. LEWIS

# Trust

Content is secondary  
to relationships.

What's your anchor?



## Advantages of Working Memory

- Allows you to focus on important stuff and ignore distractions
- Lets you prioritize incoming messages
- Facilitates quick thinking and responses
- Keeps emotions in check
- Alerts you when you need to change directions



## Factors that Erode Working Memory

- Information overload
- Stress
- Time pressures
- Powerful emotions like attraction
- Pain

SEPTEMBER

## FOCUS: ANCHOR ACTIVITY

With your staff, think of all of the anchors in your life.  
Anchors help us feel safe and connected.

Discuss:

- What are anchors?
- What is their purpose?
- What anchors do we have in our lives?

Questions to Guide Administrators & Staff:

- What people are anchors for you?
- What places feel safe and comfortable?
- What things or objects anchor you?
- What times, days, or months anchor you?
- Can you think of anything else that anchors you?



Cowan N. What are the differences between long-term, short-term, and working memory? Progress in brain research. 2008;169:323-338. doi:10.1016/S0079-6123(07)00020-9.

Desautels, Lori, "Energy and Calm: Brain Breaks and Focused-Attention Practices" (2015). Scholarship and Professional Work - Education. 107. [https://digitalcommons.butler.edu/coe\\_papers/107](https://digitalcommons.butler.edu/coe_papers/107)



The real voyage of  
discovery consists  
not in seeking new  
landscapes, but in  
having *new eyes*.

— MARCEL PROUST



# Task

Set Your Intention:

What are the difficult tasks expected of me or being asked of students?

(Make it personal or professional)



The background of the image is a reproduction of the painting 'The Starry Night' by Vincent van Gogh. It features a swirling, turbulent sky in shades of blue and yellow, with a prominent, bright yellow sun or star in the upper right corner. Below the sky, there are dark, jagged mountains and a winding path through a field of grain. The overall style is characterized by short, rhythmic brushstrokes.

“  
**GREAT THINGS**  
**ARE NOT DONE**  
**BY IMPULSE,**  
— BUT BY A —  
**SERIES OF**  
**SMALL THINGS**  
**BROUGHT TOGETHER.**

”

— *Vincent van Gogh*

# Access

**“Dress for the second mile.”**

Where are the “Honesty Boxes”?

What are the “small wins” along the way?



**Kohlberg – An honesty box strips away the lowest level of moral reasoning (the Pre-conventional stage, where people only obey rules to avoid punishment), because there is no cashier or camera to catch a thief.**

**Vygotsky – A well-designed honesty box provides behavioral scaffolding. It features clear pricing, a slot for money, and a welcoming sign. It doesn't force compliance; instead, it provides just enough environmental structure to allow a passing hiker to independently practice being a trustworthy citizen.**

**Bandura – Imagine a family hiking a Scottish trail. The parents stop at a box, pick up a jar of jam, drop the exact change into the slot, and explain to their children how the system works. The children observe a tangible demonstration of trust, community, and integrity.**



**Lealt View  
Honesty Box**



# Self-Determination Theory

The "Overjustification Effect" warns that if we pay for behavior, the internal desire dies.

**Motivation=Autonomy+Competence+Relationship**

Teaching Tip:

Instead of gold stars for finishing a book, host a "Book Talk" where students share their genuine excitement. Shift the focus from the transaction to the transformation.



# “ SMALL WINS

**Create a ripple effect of confidence**

An individual’s past history of achievement, coupled with prevailing social messages surrounding it, can also influence that person’s beliefs about their abilities. A group of students who tend to do poorly in math can adopt a **self-reinforcing identity**, for example — and ties to that group identity can grow over time.

“Teachers are learners too, who benefit from seeing competence unfold. And social identity, context, and culture matter for teachers, too.”



**SCAN ME**

**Scan the QR Code or check out one of the map sections near you. Observe. What do you see? Think about the When, Where, Who, and Why the map was made...**



UNIVERSALIS COSMOGRAPHIA SECVNDVM PTHOLONI TRADITIONEM ET AMERICI VESPVCI ALIQVORVM EVRROTIVS

# Struggle

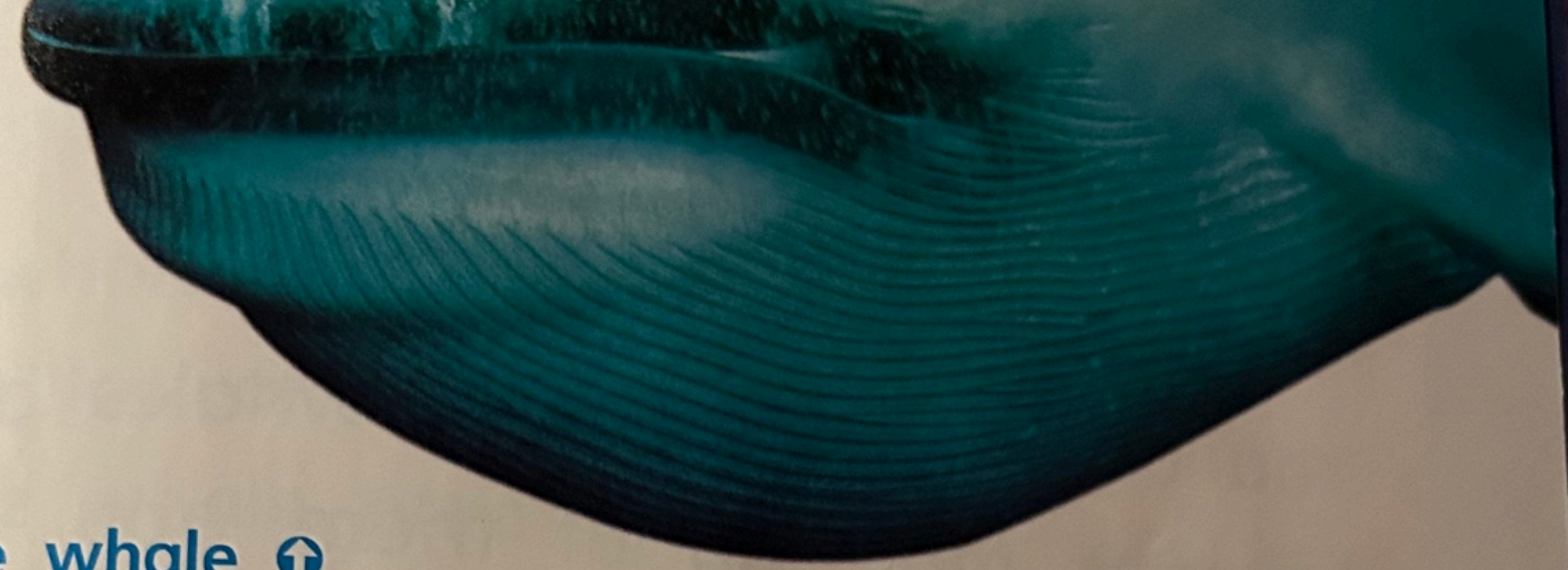
## News Flash: We are lazy.

- We want the easy path most of the time...not the road less traveled.
- How do we create space for the productive struggle?



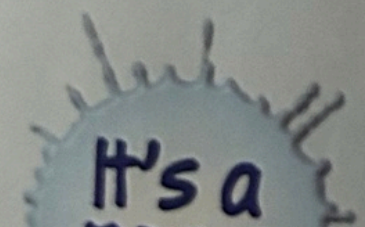
**CURIOSITY IS THE SPARK  
THAT STARTS EVERY JOURNEY.**





A blue whale ↕  
can hold 17,000 gallons (64,352 l)  
of water in its mouth!

When a blue whale opens its mouth to eat, it takes in water and krill. Blue whales have **baleen plates** instead of teeth. These plates are like combs. They keep krill in the whale's mouth. But they let water out.



Blue whales stay in the cold water of Antarctica to find food. But they

# Thank You!



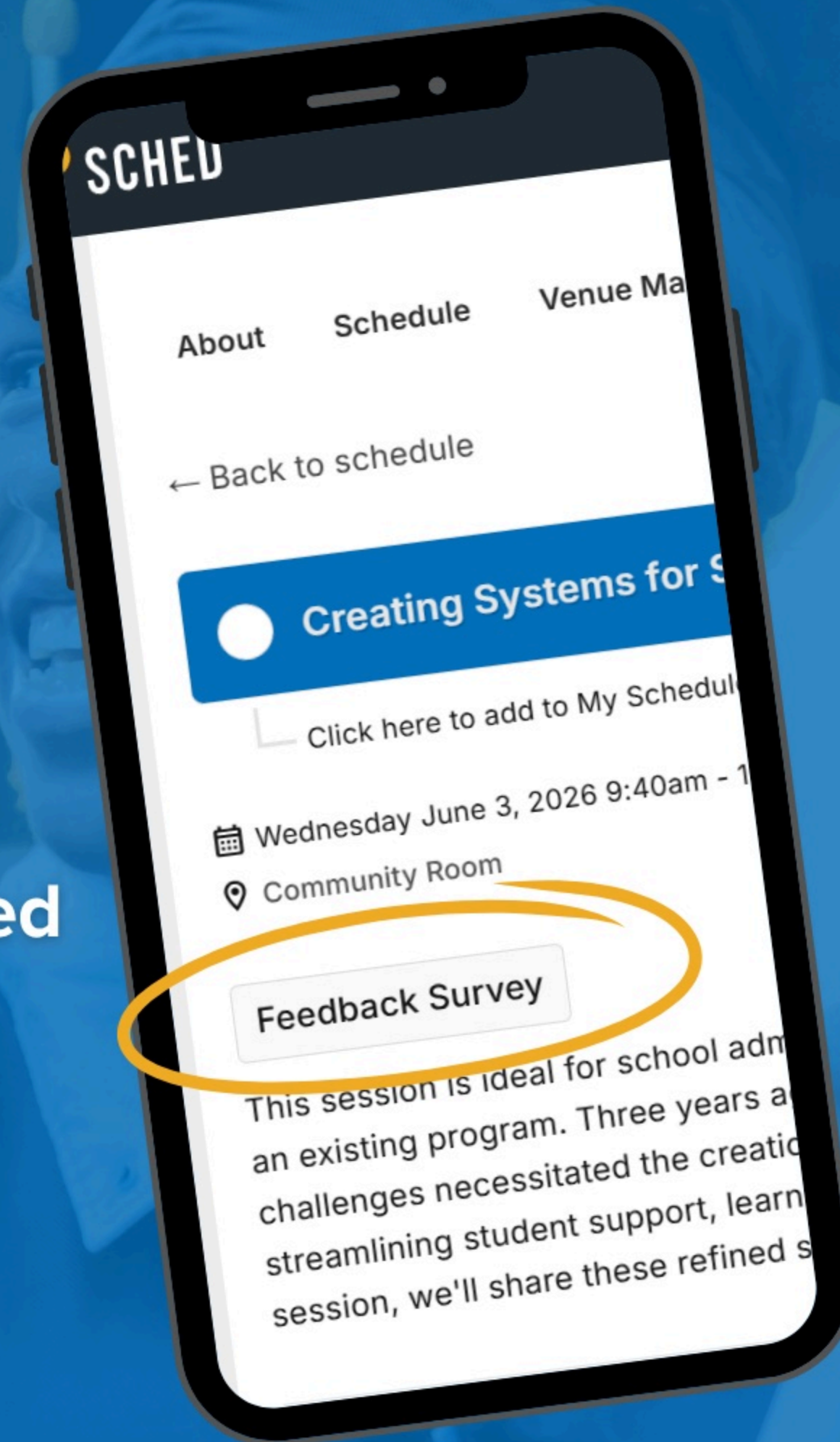
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## SURVEY REMINDER

Please complete a survey in Sched for each session you attend.



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