

# Navigating The End Of The Year Rollercoaster



*The end of the school year is a complex emotional landscape. If you're feeling a messy mix of exhaustion, excitement, sadness, hope, worry, and relief all at once. You are not alone.*

## The Final Stretch

The final month of school always feels like a speeding roller coaster. There are always too many things to do, an endless checklist of wrap-up tasks, and never quite enough time to get through them. Yet, somehow, through sheer determination and teamwork, they do get done.

Eventually, the final bell rings. The whirlwind of "goodbyes" and "have a great summer" wishes dwindles into a quiet hallway. It is only then, in the calm after the storm, that we are finally able to sit down, take a breath, and truly reflect on the work of the past school year.

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## Balancing Successes and Challenges

Every school year arrives with its own unique blend of triumphs and trials. To grow effectively, we have to reflect equally on both, recognizing that our challenges are often the very areas that push us to grow the most.

### CAMP ONE

#### The Problem-Solvers

Many of us immediately want to focus on how to get better, eagerly tackling our challenges first.

### CAMP TWO

#### The Celebrators

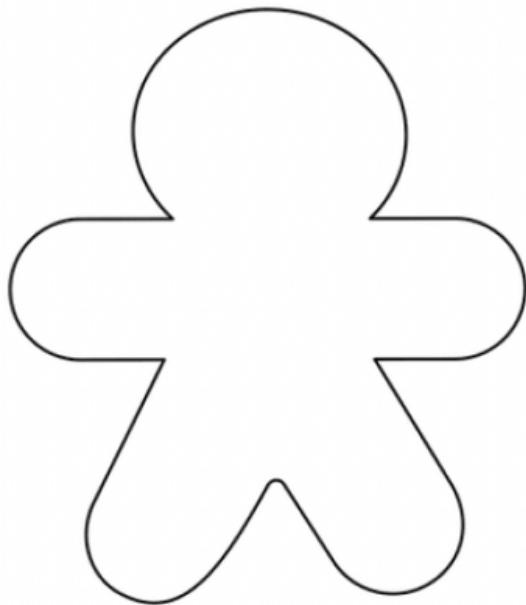
Many of us are simply not ready to dive back into the hard stuff yet, preferring to focus strictly on our successes.

True continuous improvement requires a healthy balance of both. The end of the year is a time to celebrate. We must look back and honor the immense hard work we accomplished together.

This year, those successes took many forms. Some were visible in improved test scores. Other successes were felt deeply in the social-emotional growth of our students. And many successes were found within our professional communities, in how our teams adapted to and began using best-practice systems to work more effectively as a cohesive unit.

## The Reflection Gingerbread Person

To help education teams strike this balance and ground their reflections, we love using a creative, structured framework. By mapping specific prompts to different parts of the gingerbread person, teams can capture a holistic picture of their year.



- H** **Head** A specific problem you solved this year.
- ♥** **Heart** Someone or something that deeply touched your heart.
- ~** **Stomach** — A situation that caused you stress or "indigestion."
- L** **Left hand** A moment when someone stepped in and helped you.
- R** **Right hand** A moment when you reached out and helped someone else.
- L** **Left foot** Something unhealthy or unproductive you are choosing to walk away from.
- R** **Right foot** A goal or mindset you are actively walking toward next year.

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*This exercise ensures we don't just look at data or just look at hardships, it forces us to look at the whole human experience of teaching.*



## The Heart of the Matter: The Adults in the Room

As you sit with your reflections, your data, and your gingerbread diagrams, it is worth remembering the ultimate truth of education.

When we strip away the administrative layers and look at the absolute core of schooling, it becomes clear that **everything else is secondary to the adults in the room**. Within the four walls of our classrooms, nothing impacts student learning more than the teacher.

New technology, modern facilities, and updated curricula certainly have their place. But those things are just tools. It is the educator who brings those tools to life. It is the teacher who sparks curiosity, builds relationships, and shapes the minds of the next generation.

### A NOTE OF GRATITUDE

Thank you for your dedication, your resilience, and your heart through this roller coaster of a year.

Take the time to celebrate, take the time to reflect, and most importantly, take the time to rest.

You have earned it.

— Margo Sickle



**SYSTEM  
CONTEXT**



PEOPLE

**STRUCTURES**



**CULTURE**



**POLICIES**



**DATA**



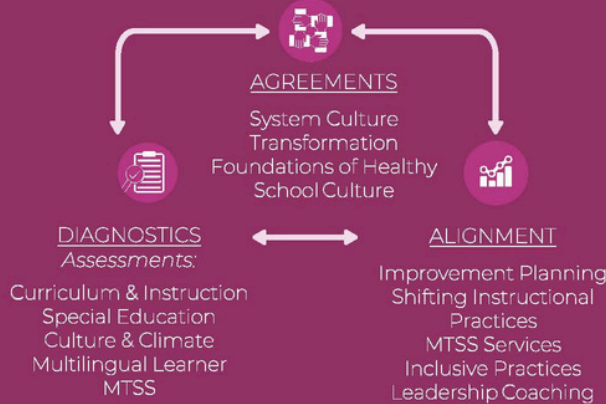
**RESOURCES**



**COMMUNICATION**



**CAPACITY BUILDING INPUTS**



**MEASURABLE OUTCOMES**



**LONG-TERM OUTCOME:**

*Increased system capacity to orchestrate equitable, inclusive transformation to reach intended outcomes through large-scale organizational change.*

When stakeholders work together around shared agreements...the unthinkable is possible. CEC's focus on the **System Agreements** in school reform efforts aim to realign the adult culture and dynamics. We know when systems cultivate healthy, values-based relationships within each school and classroom measurable outcomes are more likely. People matter. And people working together really matters in schools. Developing a strong adult culture as a foundation of a change agenda is what makes CEC stand apart.

CEC uses **System Alignment** to create collective efficacy on the agreed upon improvement aims of a school or district. Our tools and processes are designed to empower those closest to the issues to own the work. Our change management approach intentionally paces improvement through attainable short-term, mid-term, and long-term goals. It is the "secret sauce" of school improvement.

We invite you to explore the role our **Logic Model** might play in your system's large-scale improvement. Our website includes [FREE](#) resources that might be helpful in opening up dialogue with key stakeholders. Let's work together to turn ideas into action, so we can all see what's possible for our schools.