

# REACH NEW CAREER HEIGHTS



As a teacher, you're a natural leader. Here's how to show it. **By Hannah Trierweiler**

**N**ot so long ago, classroom go-getters looking to flex their leadership muscles had just one potential goal on the horizon: principal. Well, times have changed. Whether you strive to be a reading coach, curriculum planner, or, simply, a more effective classroom teacher, one of our career-boosting ideas can show everyone what we already know: You're at the head of your class.

**1 Know Your Tech Tools**  
Being a top teacher means being plugged in. But don't worry if your tech skills top out at forwarding funny

e-mail. After 9 years of low-tech teaching, Christine Norton, a second-grade teacher in Chicago, signed up for St. Bede the Venerable School's technology team. Two years later, she's traded in her chalk for an interactive white board. "I never considered myself good with computers," she says, "but I've learned how technology can help meet my students' needs." Looking for a technology boot camp? We recommend Intel's Teach to the Future ([www.intel.com/education](http://www.intel.com/education)).

**2 Cover A Competition**  
As point person for the National History Day competition at Coral

Cliffs Elementary in St. George, Utah, Karen Chatterton has traveled to Philadelphia, Boston, and Washington, D.C., in order to provide her historians with travel anecdotes and more. "It's been a wonderful opportunity to learn about our country," she says. Spearhead the program at your school by visiting [www.nationalhistoryday.org](http://www.nationalhistoryday.org). Or take charge of one of the cool contests on page 14.

**3 Show Them the Money**  
"My attitude was, I may as well try for it because I have nothing to lose," says Luanne Nelson of her first grant application to bring a theater >>

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# 10 ways to...

group to her rural school in Grant, Michigan. In 2006, Acting Up will make its fourth funded visit to Grant Elementary School—and teachers are convinced that the group's methods are helping kids to understand social studies standards. Adopt Nelson's why-not outlook and head to [www.grantsalert.com](http://www.grantsalert.com). You too could snag a big-ticket teaching tool and the thanks of the community.

## **4** Run for a Good Cause

Try organizing a teacher team for a local charity run or walk. While you may already get plenty of exercise chasing down paste-eating kindergartners, the event will give you and your coworkers a chance to bond outside your Tuesday morning staff meeting. Plus, notes leadership consultant A. C. Macris, organizing a team is a great career move: "It brings to focus your leadership skills and creates exposure across the school community," he says. More than 30 different cities will host the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation's Race for the Cure this October and November. To find out more, go to [www.komen.org](http://www.komen.org).

## **5** Start a Study Group

Been meaning to read up on the latest inclusion strategies? Act on your curiosity and invite colleagues to do the same by starting a professional study group. Like a book club, study groups gather once or twice a month to discuss professional literature. For a first pick, we like *Brain-Based Learning and Teaching*, by Diane Connell (Scholastic, 2005), which helps you analyze students' learning styles as well as your own—and clues you in to how this affects your teaching. You can find more study group advice on our Web site ([www.scholastic.com/instructor](http://www.scholastic.com/instructor)) by clicking on "Join the Club!" in the Features Library.

## **6** Get Nationally Certified

Lisa Fenn, a first-grade teacher at Roaring Brook Elementary in Avon, Connecticut, says that although her husband and dog may resent the many hours she spent preparing for National Board Certification—"I didn't talk to



Don't be afraid to share your success stories at a school board meeting. It may mean taking a risk, but that's what leaders do.

them for months!"—she remembers the process as a door-opener, both personally and professionally. "It was amazing to take an introspective look at my teaching," she says, and to "work, bond, and share" with fellow teachers. Potential candidates can now leave more time for playing with Fido by choosing the "Take One!" option, which allows you to submit just one part of the overall portfolio. To learn more, visit the National Board for Teaching Standards ([www.nbpts.org](http://www.nbpts.org)).

## 7 Take the Lead at Meetings

Brush up on basic parliamentary procedure at [www.parlipro.com](http://www.parlipro.com) and then volunteer to keep everyone on track at your next staff meeting. First explain to your principal how you plan to use the procedures and how it will improve your meetings (maybe your group has trouble sticking to one subject or always goes over the time limit). "After a stressful day of work, it's natural for a meeting to degenerate into a complaint session," explains John G. Gabriel in *How to Thrive as a Teacher Leader* (ASCD, 2005). "The parliamentarian keeps the group plowing ahead and reminds members when they are nearing the cutoff or have exceeded the time limit for a topic."

## 8 Put Your Name in Print

Many opportunities exist for would-be teacher-authors, whether

you want to share your best Thanksgiving craft or your hair-raising scare with lice. Get inspired by California teacher Phillip Done, who recently turned his classroom highs and lows into the funny, touching *32 Third Graders and One Class Bunny* (Touchstone, 2005). Not up for a book-length effort? Send multiplication games, reading incentives, and other ideas to [instructor@scholastic.com](mailto:instructor@scholastic.com). If we publish your tip, you'll receive a \$50 Scholastic gift certificate and an extra copy of the magazine—perfect for sharing with your principal when it's time for your review.

## 9 Make Your Voice Heard

In *Learning by Heart* (Jossey-Bass, 2005), education professor Roland Barth cautions that unless classroom teachers "act to change the culture of a school ... all 'innovations' will be window dressing." In other words, if you want to improve your school, you need to get out there! Share your success stories—and your frustrations—at a school board meeting or in a letter to your local newspaper. It may mean taking a risk, but that's what teacher-leaders do, according to Gabriel: "A teacher who weighs these risks and still wants his voice heard over the din is a leader whom people want to work with and to follow."

## 10 File Your Warm Fuzzies

If you already have a stash of construction-paper cards proclaiming you the "best teacher ever," you know that they can lift you up on those glitter-in-your-hair, glue-on-your-shoe days. These notes should also be filed, however, as proof of your prowess, along with any written acknowledgement of a job well done you receive from parents and administrators. This feel-good file has a twofold purpose: You'll have documentation of your successful "Muffins for Moms" event when asking your principal to get behind "Doughnuts for Dads," but you'll also embrace the part of a teacher-leader when you're reminded of how much the community appreciates all that you do. □

WHAT IS THE BEST CAREER ADVICE YOU'VE EVER RECEIVED? SHARE IT WITH US AT [INSTRUCTOR@SCHOLASTIC.COM](mailto:instructor@scholastic.com).

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