

PAT'S PULSE ON
ALL THINGS AWESOME IN EDUCATION

December's Pulse

**Celebrating the Season
with Care and Creativity**

Dear Educators,

The end of the year is upon us, and while December is filled with magic — twinkling lights, festive songs, and cozy scarves — it's also a bit of a whirlwind. Between report cards, holiday concerts, and the endless shuffle of snow boots at the door, I know this time of year can feel like a juggling act.

This month, I want to bring a little lightness your way. This newsletter is packed with ideas to spark creativity in your classroom, moments of care for yourself, and a few thoughtful ways to wrap up 2024 while looking forward to the new year. **So, grab your coziest blanket, a warm mug of something delicious, and let's savor this moment together.**

Seasonal Spark: Festive Classroom Ideas

December brings extra magic to the classroom - the kind that comes from the first snowfalls, and students buzzing with holiday excitement. As AIT teachers, you have a unique opportunity to channel that festive energy into moments of connection and creativity. Whether you're kicking off a lesson or helping students cool down afterward, these quick, 5-10-minute activities are perfect for adding a little seasonal sparkle to your day.

1. Snowball Brainstorm

Hand out small pieces of paper and ask students to write down a favorite winter memory, holiday tradition, or something they're grateful for. Then, they crumple the paper into "snowballs" and toss them into a pile. Pick a few to read aloud and invite students to share quick reflections. This activity is lighthearted, interactive, and helps create a sense of connection.



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2. Freeze Dance with a Festive Twist

Play a holiday tune (*Jingle Bell Rock* or *Frosty the Snowman* are great options) and have students dance around the room. When the music stops, they must freeze in a silly holiday pose—pretending to be a snowman, a reindeer, or even someone catching snowflakes on their tongue. A perfect energy-burner for younger grades!

3. Five-Minute Festive Doodles

Give students blank paper and set a quick drawing challenge, like "Design your dream holiday tree," "What does a snowman look like on vacation?" or "Imagine what winter looks like in outer space." Students can briefly share their creations or leave them for display if there's time.

4. Breathing with Snowflakes

Guide students in a mindfulness exercise: ask them to imagine holding a snowflake in their hands. As they breathe in, they picture it growing; as they breathe out, they imagine it gently melting. This calming activity works beautifully as a transition, especially with older grades.

5. The Great Holiday Pose-Off

Challenge students to strike a pose like a holiday character — Santa sliding down a chimney, an elf building a toy, or a snowman in a snowstorm. Others guess what they're pretending to be. It's a simple, laugh-inducing way to break the ice or end a lesson on a high note.

Whether you're bringing the energy up or winding it down, these festive activities are sure to bring a little magic to your classrooms this month!

Self-Care for Super Teachers

I know you. You give endlessly. You're running from morning yard duty to after-school meetings, pouring your energy into your students, and doing it all with heart. But here's the truth: you can't pour from an empty cup. December is your time, too.

Let's make self-care a little easier. How about starting with this affirmation? Say it out loud or write it down somewhere you'll see it often:

"I am making a difference every day. My work matters, my energy is valuable, and I deserve to take care of myself as much as I take care of others."

Take a moment - just five minutes a day - to unwind. Maybe it's stepping outside to feel the crisp winter air on your face, reminding yourself to breathe deeply and savor the stillness. Or create a cozy corner in your home where you can curl up with your favorite book or podcast. Light a candle, grab that fluffy blanket, and give yourself permission to pause.

I know it's hard to put work aside, but this season, consider carving out one "no-work evening." Watch a holiday movie that makes you laugh (*Elf is a personal favorite*), bake cookies just because, or call a friend you've been meaning to catch up with. It doesn't have to be complicated - it just needs to be yours.

If you're looking for ideas to sustain you through the school day, I recommend checking out this wonderful video on teacher self-care:

 **Self-Care for Teachers: Artfully and Mindfully**
12:58 minutes

It's a gentle reminder that even small changes can make a big difference.



Looking Ahead to January

The holiday season isn't just about rest and celebration; it's also a chance to reflect and recharge for the new year. As you sip that second cup of cocoa or enjoy the glow of the tree lights, think about what you'd like to bring to your **ArtsAround** lessons in 2025. January is a fresh start - a time to energize your students and inspire them through creativity.

One great way to ease back into the swing of things is by starting lessons with reflective or goal-oriented warm-ups. For example, invite students to participate in a quick **"New Year's Wish"** activity. Ask them, **"What's one thing you want to accomplish this year in the arts?"** or **"What's one creative skill you'd love to learn?"** Their answers can spark discussions that give you insight into their interests and help focus your teaching moments.

If you're working with younger grades, consider incorporating a bit of playful energy to combat post-holiday sluggishness. A **"January Mystery Box Challenge"** works perfectly here. Fill a small box with random items — paper clips, fabric scraps, pipe cleaners — and give students a 5-minute challenge to create something imaginative or solve a fun problem. This activity not only warms up their critical thinking but also brings the arts to life in a hands-on way.

For older students, you might start with a short reflection exercise: **"What's one thing I learned in ArtsAround this year that I'm proud of?"** or **"What's one creative risk I want to take this year?"** These short prompts can set a reflective tone while encouraging students to think of the arts as an integral part of their personal growth.

January is also a wonderful time to reintroduce mindfulness into your lessons. After the holiday rush, students often need a moment to breathe and refocus. Consider starting or ending a session with the simple mindfulness exercise, **"Breathing with Snowflakes."**

No matter where you're teaching or which group of students, you're with, January is an invitation to inspire. It's a chance to reignite curiosity, bring energy into the classroom, and remind students that the arts are a space for creativity, reflection, and growth. Let's make 2025 a year filled with imagination and joy!



A Reflective Farewell

As we wrap up the year, I want to take a moment to reflect on the journey we've been on together. In September, we focused on starting strong, laying the foundations for a successful school year. In October, we celebrated the relationships that make our classrooms vibrant and full of life. And in November, we leaned into gratitude, reminding ourselves of the joy and purpose in what we do.

Now, in December, it's time to bring it all together. This season is about creativity and care — nurturing your students and yourself. You've done incredible work this year, and it's okay to pause and celebrate that. As 2025 approaches, I hope you're excited about all the possibilities ahead. I hope your coffee stays hot, your students surprise you with their kindness, and you find joy in the little moments that make this profession so special.

Enjoy your holiday break — you've earned it. And when January comes, let's tackle it together with fresh ideas, renewed energy, and the same dedication that makes you an incredible educator.



**“Yesterday I was clever, so I wanted to change the world.
Today I am wise, so I am changing myself.”**

Rumi