



Teacher Tip of the Week

Making the Most of the Dreaded End-of-School Days



Ideas to Share

"No more pencils, no more books, no more..."

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No more time? The last days of school may be upon us and your students may already be chanting the traditional end-of-school

cheer, but that doesn't mean that you have to succumb to the temptation to start summer early. Why throw away the last few precious days? Instead, blow your students away with some cool end-of-year activities that combine fun and learning.

With less than a week of school left, the kids are already off the wall. Don't give up on this school year too soon, though. Just because books have been tucked into storage and final exams are done, that doesn't mean that the remaining school days should be wasted!

Many schools use the final days of the year to turn themselves into continuing learning centers. In those schools, every teacher plans a special mini course based on an area of personal interest. Mini courses run the gamut -- baseball math to bike maintenance to bread baking to bowling and beyond. Kids sign up for two 2-hour sessions each day. Mini courses allow students to mix with different groups of kids while keeping them busy and happy!

It might be too late for you to organize mini courses for the last few days of this school year, but you can still keep students happily and productively occupied. All you need is a plan.

FIVE END-OF-YEAR LESSONS

This week, an offering of several lesson plans to help you fill the final hours of the school year.

1. THINKING AHEAD TO NEXT YEAR

Invite your students to leave behind advice for those who will follow in their footsteps or to write informative letters to the teachers who will teach them next year.

The letters might include favorite memories of the class or grade, advice about how to be successful in the grade, things to do and not to do, and so on. Emphasize to students that letters should be positive, designed to help calm the jitters students often feel during the first days of a new school year. (If you did this activity the previous year, remind students of how they felt when they read the letters left behind by the previous year's students.) Store student letters in a safe place until the first day of the next school year. Then post a selection of the letters on a bulletin board, place a single letter on each student's desk, or read aloud a selection of the letters.

BRAD PAISLEY'S LETTER TO MYSELF—Instead of having students write letters to next year's students, have them write letters to themselves! The letters will tell what they are like at their current age, what they like, who their friends are, and so on. (Students can brainstorm the kinds of information they will include in their letters.)

POCKET CHARTS



Keep a "pocket chart" with 3 or 4 ideas for students to do if they finish assignments early. It's titled "What to Do Next". This way they always have something to do. It contains things such as: 1. Write a note to a friend. 2. Choose a new book. 3. Organize your desk.

Helpful Website for Teachers

<http://www.readytovote.org/>



Website for teens who are just about ready to register to vote. Info on elections and candidates.

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The New Teacher Support Program

Making the Most of the Dreaded End-of-School Days

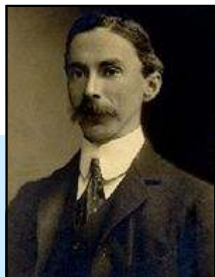
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2. AN AUTOGRAPH BOOK FROM YESTERYEAR

Students explore a school autograph book from the 1880s and create a contemporary version of it. Students study the pages of a historic autograph book and talk about how the autograph book differs from present-day autograph books and discuss any clues about the time in which the book was written. Have students imitate the style of the autograph book entries as they write thoughtful text and rhymes. Compile individual entries into a class autograph book written in a 19th-century style.

3. DESIGN A POETRY T-SHIRT

Bring out the poetry books! Gather poetry books from the local library if your school library is unavailable during the last week of school. Encourage students to immerse themselves in the poems you



“No man can be a good teacher unless he has feelings of warm affection toward his pupils and a genuine desire to impart to them what he himself believes to be of value.”—

BERTRAND RUSSELL

collect. As they read, ask them to keep a record of their favorite poems so they remember where they saw them; they should record the poem title and author as well as the title of the book in which they found the poem. Encourage students to select a variety of poems -- poems of different styles and types, poems that express different emotions, and so on.

Have students bring in old T-shirts or white shirts that they have their parents permission to write on. The bigger the shirt, the better. Dad's T-shirt is great! If possible, the shirt should be free of advertising. On the appointed day, invite students to use markers and fabric paints to turn the T-shirts into Poet-T's! This is their opportunity to share their favorite poems -- original *and* collected -- with their peers and for students with artistic skills to demonstrate those skills by illustrating a poem or two.

When the T-shirts are dry, encourage students to wear them for the rest of the day -- or select a special day to be Poet-T Day in your class or school. Arrange for students to model their creations and share favorite poems with their classmates.

4. SCAVENGER HUNT FOR INFORMATION

Plan a scavenger hunt for information! Develop questions for books in your classroom library, or create a list of five questions for each volume of a set of encyclopedia. When students find all five answers in the, let's say, C volume, the teacher can check the answers. Then the student grabs one of the volumes that isn't being used and tackles the five questions related to that volume. Give prizes to the students who come up with the greatest number of correct answers!

6. ALPHA AUTOBIOGRAPHIES

Invite students to create their own alphabetical autobiographies. Here's an example: "A is for Arkansas; that's where I was born. B is for Bonnie; that's my sister's name. C is for Cub Scouts; That's my favorite activity."

7. PRODUCE A TV COMMERCIAL

Challenge students to create their own new products such as toys or breakfast cereals. Each student will create packaging and a TV commercial pitch to go along with it. Videotape students as they present their TV commercials!

8. T-SHIRT MEMORIES

Ask each of your students to bring a white T-shirt to school on one of the last days of the year. Paint each child's hand with bright-colored paint; then each student presses his or her handprint onto the T-shirt. The students sign their names under their handprints. Students go around to one another's desks and collected autographs. They use thick, pointy-tipped, permanent black markers to sign the T-shirts. The teacher's hand print and autograph should also be added to each child's t-shirt.

The parents will be thrilled to see their children wear these on the last day of school. They will make a lasting memory for years to come.

9. TEACHER REPORT CARD

Students will receive their report cards in the next few days. Since you have taken a great deal of time to grade their performance, why not take this opportunity to give them a chance to grade *your* performance?

You might begin this lesson by talking about some of the things you consider as you grade students' efforts. Or you might turn over the responsibility for this discussion to them by asking *What are some of the things that you think I consider as I determine your report card grades?*

After students have talked about elements of the teacher grading them, turn the discussion toward the work that you do. You might pose this question: *If teachers were to get report cards, what are some of things that might be considered when a teacher is graded?*

These are just a few of the hundreds of activities teachers can use to make the last days of school meaningful!

New Teacher Support Group Participants



MICHAEL SMOTHERMAN
W. A. WRIGHT ELEMENTARY
CDC

WHY DID YOU BECOME A TEACHER?

"Through my life experiences, I realized I have always been a teacher in one way or another. I am very blessed, and I have been called to give of my talents to children with disabilities new opportunities to live to learn. I have given a lot of thought to my own mission statement for teaching children with disabilities. 'Children who are learning to live will be given new opportunities to live to learn.'"—Michael Smotherman



LORI RIGGINS
W.A. WRIGHT ELEMENTARY
PRE-K

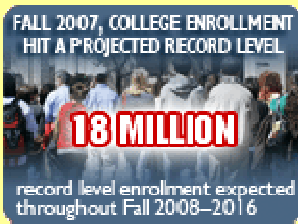
WHY DID YOU BECOME A TEACHER?

"I decided to become a teacher for the new adventure that each day holds. I enjoy being active and know that everyday of teaching is extremely active. I want to encourage students and model how exciting school can be if you have a good teacher."—Lori Riggins

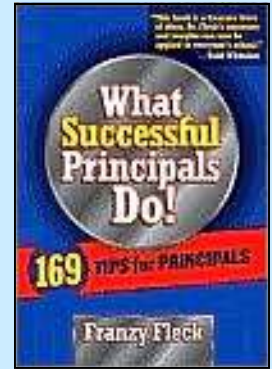
TEACHERS MUST BE ABLE TO APOLOGIZE

An apology can worth thousands of words of explanation—and build trust. Here are two actions that help us learn how and when to apologize. First, apologize in terms of the past, present and future, but never try to justify the mistake. For instance, if you took credit for something others did, "frame" the action you took in the past and promise it won't happen in the future. Second, don't apologize if only regrets are called for. Remember, honest mistakes aren't willfully wrong or intentionally deceiving. Hence, you need only to express regret. Say, "I made a bad decision—I regret that."—*Master Teacher Tips*

EDUCATION FACTS



College enrollment hit a projected record level of 18.0 million in fall 2007. College enrollment is expected to continue setting new records throughout the fall 2008 through fall 2016 period.



What Successful Principals Do by Franzy Fleck

Here are practical insights from an experienced principal about how to run a successful school. Organized into three sections (Beginning the School Year, During the School Year, and Ending the School Year) these tips are powerful and attainable. Each one is introduced by an inspiring quote, followed by practical advice on how to implement the strategy. The 169 tips include:

- Encourage Staff to Set Improvement Goals
- Take Staff on Neighborhood Visits
- Call Parents with Good News Early
- Learn What Parents and Students Want
- Give Messages That Students Are Safe
- Stress Procedures Early
- Be Visible Daily
- Keep No Secrets from Your Staff
- Don't Make Decisions to Keep Friends
- Don't Wait for Group Consensus
- Praise Twice
- Be a Nurturing Leader
- Use Peer Pressure
- Let Kids Work It Out
- Have Family Night Activities
- Admit Mistakes
- Learn to Handle Complaints to Your Superiors
- Have Written Goals and Update Them Regularly



WILSON COUNTY SCHOOLS



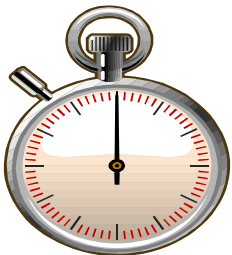
Meditations on the Year— Thoughts on Teaching the first Year

"My first year of teaching has been full of many wonderful surprises. I never knew the average teenage girl's voice could hit such octaves. I never expected to reach a point in my life where I would yearn for my bed at 9:30 every night. I was not prepared for the moment I first heard myself ask, 'Does anyone in class not think that spitting on the floor is inappropriate behavior?' But most of all, I never thought that teaching would be such an exhilarating and rewarding career, continually pushing me in my quest to be a master educator. . . . My job is creeping into every aspect of my life. How many people can pick up a box of corn flakes and have it trigger an idea for a lesson plan about government regulation? . . . Teaching stimulates my creative juices like nothing I have ever experienced. . . . Finally, there is one last bit of wisdom that I would like to pass on to colleges regarding the first year of teaching. Don't focus in on the negative side of the profession. I must have spent hours listening to first year teachers, who appeared gaunt, malnourished and exhausted, drone on about how they were 'coping.' It's no wonder that so many potentially good teachers are scared off so early. Reinforce the intrinsic rewards that teaching offers. Stress that as a teacher you will experience the satisfaction of knowing you make a difference, the ability to have a marked effect on the life of an emerging adult, and the excitement of advancing young minds. These are the things I did not expect."—Jeffrey Breedlove, New Teacher, 10th-12th grades, Kansas

Time Management Tips for Teachers

COMMUNICATING EFFICIENTLY

11. Periodic newsletters are a great way to keep in touch with parents, but finding the time to write them can be tricky. Try to do one or two a month. Simply run down your schedule and give a one-line description about past, present, and future plans in each subject area. End with important dates and other items of note. This makes the task quick and painless.
12. To make your newsletter task even easier, send it out to parents using e-mail. Or, create a website



for your class and post it there for parents to access.

4 WAYS TO PUT OFF PROCRASTINATION

When faced with an unpleasant or seemingly overwhelming task, we often become creative in discovering ways to avoid getting started—surefire strategies for wasting time. Here are four ways to overcome procrastination:

1. Learn to recognize your avoidance behaviors. Catch yourself and resolve not to fall into the pit of procrastination.
2. Break a large project down into smaller tasks, and tackle one at a time.

Continued next week...

Need a Laugh?



It is the policy of the Wilson County School System not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, or disability in its educational programs or employment policies as required by Titles VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Equal Pay Act of 1973, and the Americans with Disabilities Act.