



# Teacher Tip of the Week

## New Teacher Support Program 2009-2010

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Teacher Tip of the Week  
New Teacher Support  
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### Teacher Tips and Ideas for Planning for the Last Days of School

#### HOW TO DO IT— CHECKLIST



#### Clean-up Activity with a “Mystery Item”

Right before clean up time, I look around the room and pick out an item that will need to be picked up and put away. During clean up time, I let the children know there is a "mystery item". When everything has been picked up and put away, I disclose what the mystery item was and who picked it up. (It can be a block, a piece of paper on the floor, a crayon under the table...) The child who picked the item up, and put it away correctly, receives a little treat. Treats can be stickers, a "Caught Being Good" note, line leader, etc. When I do this the first time, I make sure the children understand that the item must be PUT AWAY CORRECTLY, or there will be no treat. When the children know there is a mystery item, EVERYTHING is picked up quickly AND put in the right spot. They seem to race from item to item, never sure if they have picked up the mystery item yet!—Kathie Hilliard

So, your students want end of school year fun. What's the best way to plan end of the year activities?

Planning for the end of the school year is not as easy as it may look to an eager student ready to hit the beach. The key is to change the classroom routine so that it has a built-in end of the year appeal. Not every idea is feasible. Here are a few tips for planning the end of the school year.

#### Group Competition or Games in the Classroom

End of the year games provides a lot of end of the year school fun. Here are a few tips:

- Make a list and prepare ALL materials in advance. This also includes room set-up, technical issues from computer use to DVD or disc player if needed, purchasing prizes in advance, or writing certificates, preparing the actual game materials. Brainstorm with another teacher and predict any problems. You'll be glad you did.
- *Competition games* such as *Scavenger Hunts* are fun for the end of the school year, but they require a bit more leg work. Before preparing a list of tasks, make sure those tasks are in fact technically feasible. For example, expecting a group to find three names of endangered animals is feasible, but expecting them to go to the lab or science room and copy the names of the fossils when the lab room is occupied by another class is probably not such a good idea.

#### Fun Teaching Games for the Classroom

A fun lesson can include end of the year blackboard games. Starting with the blackboard is an appealing option because

it centers and focuses the students' attention. A new teacher can review vocabulary words in a hangman game or provide definitions for words starting with each letter of the alphabets if students are early decoders. To ensure success, try doing the following:

- keep instructions for the games short and to the point.
- explain what you want with an example. Always model your responses.
- provide positive statements like "good job" or "nice try"
- provide positive reinforcement. Certificates are a better option than edibles.

be flexible. If you only have half a class, plan a different type of activity or shorter activities that require perhaps less preparation.

#### End of the School Year Lesson Plans

If your students aren't in the mood for playing games, you can have them do a more lighthearted learning activity. Have them write an informal letter to their next

year subject teacher. They should give a little bit of details about themselves explaining what they have learned, what their expectations are for next year and what they would like to see in the future lessons. Students like to feel they are a part of the planning process. There is nothing like feedback and information that helps guide the future teacher in his/her lesson planning as s/he gets to know his/her students.

With a little bit of pre-planning and organizational tactics, you can finish the end of the school year with a good feeling that will leave your students motivated.—  
*Dorit Sasson*



## End of Year Ideas for Classroom Awards/Recognition

The end of the school year brings out many emotions for teachers and students. Some respond with tears and feelings of sadness. Others are relieved it is over and ready to go on. Working within both extremes of emotions can be challenging, especially for younger students, but cleverly designed end of year activities can smooth the change for all involved.

A popular end of year activity is to provide awards to students. Some of the awards recognize achievement or talent while others might identify a personality trait or fun event initiated by the child. By keeping the awards positive, the teacher can provide a fun and memorable end to the school year and help children focus on the best parts of their time in class.

### Awards Recognizing Academic Achievement

Academic achievement can be the easiest category for awards. Some students, either naturally or through perseverance and effort, stand out in major subject areas. Others might shine through activities, such as being an avid book reader or knowledgeable about computers. Some options for academic awards include:

- Best Spoken/Written Vocabulary (for vocabulary usage above expectations for age/grade)
- Best Speller
- Best Author/Writer (could include poetry, sentence structure or reports)
- Young Scientist (best use of scientific method)
- Mad Scientist (most creative with science experiments)
- Math Wizard
- Ravenous Reader (most books or recorded hours)

- Computer Wizard
- Most Improved in Math/ Science/English/Social Studies (or other academic subjects)



### Awards Recognizing Talents

Some children have natural talents outside of academics. Some students use these talents creatively in class and others might save their creativity for the playground or extra curricular activities. Even if these talents are occasionally disruptive, make sure to give them in a positive manner. Some ideas for talent awards are:

- Most Inquisitive (always has questions)
- Most Creative
- Best Singer
- Best Musician
- Best Dancer
- Young Artist
- Best Athlete
- Most Dramatic (could be young actor/actress or always guaranteed to respond dramatically)
- Best Group Leader (natural leadership skills)

### Miscellaneous Award Ideas

Not every child has an obvious talent or shines academically. Many students will need to be recognized for other positive traits and qualities. Some other award ideas include:

- Best Storyteller (either invented or through retelling)
- Always a Team Player
- Best Team Supporter
- Always Eager to Participate
- Most Persuasive (young lawyer or loves to argue)
- Neatest Handwriting
- Perfect Attendance
- Always a Class Citizen (always upholds rules or helps another student)
- Most Organized
- Cleanest Desk
- Always Completes Homework
- Best Manners
- Most Helpful (always offers to help teacher or other students)
- 110% (for the student who never gives up)
- Helping a Friend in Need
- Always on Time
- Green Award (for the best recycler or Earth-friendly habits)

An end of year award ceremony gives each child an opportunity to be recognized for his or her own achievements, talents or efforts. Try to focus on the positive aspects of each child and keep the ceremony fun. Providing printed awards, ribbons or pins gives each child something to take home, share, and keep in a scrapbook. Providing healthy snacks after the classroom



**“That is what learning is. You suddenly understand something you've understood all your life, but in a new way.”**

**-- Doris Lessing**

award ceremony gives it a festive atmosphere that contributes to the fun.

This is also a good time to have students share addresses, phone numbers or comments for each other in a memory book so they can keep in touch during the summer or read comments left by friends when they want to remember their time in class. Memory books can be created during an earlier art lesson or class activity so they are unique for each student.—*Suite 101—Tammy Andrew*

'09-'10

NEW TEACHER SUPPORT PROGRAM  
PARTICIPANTSAudrey Taylor

Lebanon High School

Physical Science, Chemistry I

## WHY DID YOU BECOME A TEACHER?

"I became a science teacher because the next generation is the future of this country. That said, I wanted an active role in improving the science skills and interests of young students so that they might become knowledgeable professionals such as surgeons, doctors, engineers, and chemists who will impact our world."—Audrey Taylor

Jason Knowles

Watertown High School

Social Studies, Drivers Education

"Initially I wanted to become a lawyer, but it all changed when I got to Cumberland. I majored in history because I thought that I knew enough to do well. The professors in the history department really changed my outlook on history. They taught with such enthusiasm! It really motivated me to study history. I had never had teachers get so excited about something that was 200 years old. It was enlightening! I then noticed that I wasn't the only student in the room that was on the edge of their seat. Every student in the room began to interact, causing us to learn the subject matter together. This method of group interaction was very successful. It is because of these three professors that I became a teacher. I felt that I could bring the same enthusiasm to the subject that motivated all of their students. Monty Pope, Rick Bell, and Dr. Jim Dressler are the reasons I became a teacher. I also hope to have an impact on others lives, just as they did mine."—Jason Knowles

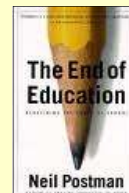
Luke Puryear

Lebanon High School

Economics, Freshmen Seminar

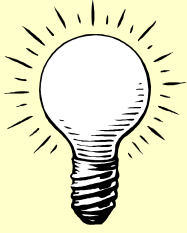
"I became a teacher so I could make an impression in young people's lives. It is very gratifying to watch them learn and mature. Also, I always said that I would rather be poor and happy as opposed to being rich and miserable."—Luke Puryear

## Off the shelf:



**The End of Education:  
Redefining the Value of  
School**  
by Neil Postman

After 20 books Postman, social critic par excellence, has returned to his original turf: education. Sharp, witty, and frequently quotable, he demolishes many leading popular themes as lacking in meaning. Education without spiritual content or, as he puts it, without a myth or narrative to sustain and motivate, is education without a purpose. That purpose used to be democracy and could still be, if only we were willing to look for the elements that unite rather than separate. Postman considers multiculturalism a separatist movement that destroys American unity. Diversity, however, is one of the themes he would employ in teaching language, history, and culture. Postman offers a number of positive and uplifting themes around which a new education philosophy could be formulated, some of which are far-fetched or extreme but nonetheless interesting. A most welcome addition to the education debate; highly recommended for all libraries.



# Strategies for Teachers . . .

## Imaginative Recreation

### What is it?

Imaginative recreation is re-creating a literature text or part of a text in a way that helps students to both deepen their understanding and appreciation of a text and express a considered response to it. When students retell part of a text from the point of view of a minor character, or change the time or setting, for example, they are engaging in imaginative recreation. Originally presented by Leslie Stratta, John Dickens and Andrew Wilkinson in England in 1973, it has been developed by Australian educators such as Peter Adams, Wayne Sawyer and Ken Watson.

### What is its purpose?

Engaging in imaginative recreation helps students to explore many aspects of a text in some depth. It assists them in working through a response to a text. It also supports them in constructing their own imaginative texts.

### How do I do it?

The first choice teachers make is to decide what form or forms the imaginative recreation is to take, depending on what is appropriate as a development of the original text. Teachers choose forms that are plausible and that lead to a deeper understanding of the text. The following examples show how students can use imaginative recreation to explore and express their responses to texts.

- retelling a short story or a picture book as a poem - helps students to interpret themes, to focus closely on word choice, to develop their understanding of the features of both literary forms
- changing a newspaper report into a short story or a short story into a television news item - helps students to investigate how genre helps to determine emphasis
- preparing a script based on an incident in a novel - helps students to develop interpretation of characters and their relationships, to investigate differences between spoken and written language
- changing the narrative point of view of the printed text of a picture book - helps students to explore the interplay between written and visual text.
- retelling a scene from a film as narrative fiction or creating a video drama from an incident in a novel - helps students' to develop their understanding of elements such as mood, setting and point of view.

creating a map of the setting of a text - helps students to read or listen to or view the text in a close and purposeful way.

Teachers explain clearly to their students what the purpose of the chosen re-creation is. All of these possibilities have a range of benefits for students and they all help students to move toward analysis of texts, but a clear explanation will help students to understand what their focus is in working with the text.

To demonstrate how imaginative re-creation works, the teacher can prepare a re-creation to share with the students, based on a text shared previously, or work on a short re-creation together with the whole class.

Students work on their re-creations individually, in pairs or small groups. The re-creations are shared with other students or groups. Collections of re-creations make excellent group or class publications to share more widely.

### How can I adapt it?

Students can imaginatively recreate:

- using a particular medium - television, radio, newspaper
- with a different literary genre - poetry, drama script, monologue, diary, letter
- with a different setting - time, place
- using a combination of genres - as in *The Jolly Postman*, but based on the same text from the point of view of a minor character

### How can it be used to evaluate students' language learning?

Imaginative recreation can help students to explore and demonstrate their contextual understanding, and their knowledge of particular linguistic structures and features. Imaginative recreation is itself a strategy for interpreting layers of meaning in texts, involving close re-reading or re-viewing of texts. The student's text and the student's explanation of choices made to produce the text both provide opportunities for evaluation.