Topic of the Week:

SETTING UP YOUR CLASSROOM AND BEGINNING OF YEAR THINGS TO DO

HOME VISITS

GRADES: K-3

The beginning of a new school year brings anxiety to students and teachers too. Especially to the new student, the kindergartner. A scheduled Home Visit, before school begins, with each child and their family is beneficial. Following is information on Kindergarten Home Visits. However, you can adapt this information to any lower elementary grade level.

Benefits to the Teacher:

- Meeting the child and family before school begins.
- Know where they live.
- Can meet older brothers or sisters. Helpful to know if someone older may be with them after school if no parent is home.
- Can see interaction between family members.
- Can ask if there are any health problems. (asthma…)
- Can give general information about the school and your class.
- Take a family picture to use for a bulletin board.
- Take an individual student picture. Get doubles and put one on their locker and one in the room.
- Usually you will get a tour of the child’s bedroom. This

will give you information on the child's likes.
- Can observe the child's temperament.

To the Parents:

- Can meet you before school begins.
- Can meet you on their "turf", a comfortable setting.
- Can ask questions.
- Especially helpful for parents with their first child starting school.
- Meet in a more informal setting.
- Their child usual has to clean their room!
- Gets information about the teachers classroom expectations and consequences.

To the Child:

- Meet you before school begins.
- He/she will see a familiar face on the first day of school.
- Meeting a student at home makes him/her feel important.
- Will see his/her family's picture that first day of school, gives him/her a feeling of belonging.
- Will see his/her picture on the locker so he/she knows which locker is his/her's.
- He/she will be able to listen to some stories.
- Can ask questions.
- Will hear what to expect in kindergarten.

Preparing for a Home Visit

1. Choose three short books to take that relate to the beginning of school. (Ex. All by Myself- Mercer Mayer- Things a small child can do by themselves., Jessica- Kevin Henkes- A small girl has a pretend friend named

Jessica. Will she be able to take Jessica with her when she starts kindergarten?, Berenstain Bears Go to School- Stan and Jan Berenstain- The bears go back to school. Sister Bear starts kindergarten.)

2. Make copies of all information you want Parents to know. Such as: day and time- 1st day of school, what to bring, Curriculum Themes, Classroom Expectations and Consequences, Open House day and time, Parent/Teacher conferences days and times, Room Helpers information (if you need help in the room), Field Trip information and any other information you'd like them to know
3. Buy film for camera.
4. Make a Time Schedule for your Home Visits. The week before school starts works well. An example of a schedule might be: M-Th: 9-12/1-4/5-8 Allow 20-30 minutes per family and allow driving time. Time slots would be as follows: 9:00-9:30/ 9:30-10:00/ 10:00-10:30/ 10:30-11:00…
5. It is best to send a note out to all parents one week before you call to set up a Home Visit. It can be given at Registration Time, however, this does not leave much time for setting up Home Visits. The note might include: General information about yourself., Tell them you would like a Home Visit. The benefits of a Home Visit (write a couple). Let them know this is not a requirement and that they do not have to schedule a Home Visit. Let them know if they would like to visit at the school, instead of at their home, this is an option. The Home Visit Schedule- so they may decide in advance when they would like you to come. Give days and time periods- such as: M-Th: 9-12/1-4/5-8 Tell them you will be calling the week before the scheduled Home Visits.
6. Call parents and schedule a Home Visit. You may want to schedule only 2 mornings or 2 afternoons. Usually parents ask for the evening times. If you know someone is home during the day, you can suggest a morning or afternoon time.

The Home Visit

1. Introduce yourself.
2. Ask a general question to get things started. (Ex. How long have you lived here? Is this your first child in school? Talk about the weather. General conversation, usually something will catch your eye about the house, siblings, the student… that will interest you.)
3. Take a family picture. Explain that this will be used for a bulletin board at school.
4. Take an individual picture. Explain that this is to put on their locker. Tell them to look for their picture when they get to school. Also, another picture will be put up in the classroom.
5. Write down the names of the family members so that you may label the picture at school.
6. Give Parents the Information Packet.
7. Read a story or two to all the children present while the parents are reading the Information Packet.
8. Ask if the parents or child has any questions and answer them.
9. Ask any questions you'd like answered.
10. Thank them for their hospitality. The child may want to show you his/her room before you leave.

A Home Visit is beneficial to all participants. It helps get the school year off on a positive note. There will be some parents that will not want to participate. Don't be discouraged. If you continue to do Home Visits each year, people will feel more comfortable with them and understand the benefits it provides to everyone.

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CLASSROOM SET-UP

GRADES 3-12

It is typical for classrooms to be set up in rows, or lately, in groups of 3-4 tables (which allow for easier cooperative learning). However, there are fundamental problems for each:

In rows, studies have shown that the further back you go, the more discipline problems there are. The visual, aural and physical stimulation from the teacher is increasingly diminished as you move further back. This allows boredom to set in, and as a result, potential disruption.

In groups, the opposite is true. Students are over stimulated—by the peers that are now not only next to him/her, but across the table! There is now MORE to distract the student, leaving it harder for the teacher to keep the student focused on any frontal instruction.

An alternative is to arrange the chairs/tables into a three-sided “box”shape (|_|), (with an occasional second row if room demands). In this fashion, EVERY STUDENT IS IN THE FIRST ROW! The teacher can freely move around the room while talking, and therefore giving “personal”contact with each student. The result: greater attention and fewer discipline problems. Desks/tables can be moved into cooperative learning groups as needed usually within two-three minutes!

submitted by

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A LIST OF THINGS TO DO BEFORE SCHOOL STARTS

GRADES K-12

ROOM ENVIRONMENT

- Decide on a theme for your classroom
- Prepare/purchase bulletin board materials
- Decide where to post notices/materials
- Make a classroom welcome sign
- Set up learning centers, display tables, and student work areas

SUPPLIES

- Writing, drawing, and construction paper
- Pencils/Pens
- Crayons
- Paste/glue
- Stapler/staples
- Paper clips
- Rubber bands
- Straight and safety pins
- Transparent tape
- Manila folders
- Marking pens
- Rulers
- Art supplies
- Grade book
- Lesson plan book
- Attendance materials

- Textbooks/workbooks
- Boxes for keeping units

FIND OUT ABOUT

- Fire drills
- Tornado drills
- Lunch procedure
- Staff handbook
- Dismissal procedure
- Your colleagues

STUDENT PREP

- Make student name tags
- Prepare first-day materials to send home (emergency cards, school/classroom rules, bus regulations/info, letter to parents, classroom schedule)
- Prepare class list
- Decide on your seating procedure
- Check records for students with special needs

GETTING ORGANIZED

- Brainstorm class expectations
- Arrange desks
- Pin up bulletin boards, notices, etc.
- Write lesson plans for the first week
- Duplicate materials for first week
- Write daily schedule, date, and your name on the board
- Prepare files for parent correspondence, school bulletins, and sub teachers

THINK ABOUT PROCEDURES FOR…

- Book distribution
- Turning in work, format of work
- Handing back assignments
- Homework
- Grading—recording grades, extra credit, portfolios
- Housekeeping procedures—clean up, supply storage
- Rewards and incentives
- Communicating with parents
- Signals for students' attention
- Daily routines—beginning of day, transition times, independent and group work
- Agenda use and motivators

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MEETING THE PARENTS—1ST DAY JITTERS

GRADES: K-3

Ease everyone's 1st Day jitters by inviting students and parents to visit your room together for an Open House the evening BEFORE school starts. This gives you a chance to greet each family individually, and to collect requested items (like tissues) and information (how is your child getting home tomorrow?).

Instead of putting together a formal program, simplify your life by creating a simple “Scavenger Hunt” in which the child and family can become familiar with his/her new room (parents can read the items to pre-readers). Use easily located items such as the clock, the bathroom, student’s name in 3 places, a poem, etc. Include yourself as the last item to be found. This gives you an opportunity to talk once again with your new student. This is also a great time to take a photo of the student with their family (this really helps put a name to a face later at conferences!). Send students off with a cheerful goodbye – make sure you tell them at least 1 activity that you have planned for the next day to give them something to look forward to.

With primary children, it’s also helpful to wear something bright at Open House. If you wear the same outfit the next day, younger children will be able to easily recognize you on the playground, or at the door, or wherever you collect your group!

Students and teachers will feel so much more confident when they know exactly where they are going and what to expect the first day, and everyone will be reassured enough to get a good night,s sleep!

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GUIDELINES FOR GOOD CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT PRACTICE

GRADES 3-12

> *Editor's note: There are many different practices that are used for good classroom management. Here is one teacher's opinion.* ***As with all classroom management practices, adapt what you like to your classroom****, taking account the age, ethnicity, and personality of the class as a group, and of you as a teacher.S.M.*

Maintaining good order in classrooms is one of the most difficult tasks facing young inexperienced teachers. The task has become more difficult over the past few decades as young people's attitudes to people in authority have changed dramatically. Some of the changes have led to greater self-confidence in students. Others—such as the acceptance of violence to achieve ends, attitudes to substance abuse and an increasing lack of respect for authority—have made classroom management and life in school generally more difficult, and more demanding, on those who are charged with maintaining a positive learning environment.

Many disruptive behaviors in the classroom can be alleviated before they become serious discipline problems. Such behaviors can be reduced by the teacher's ability to employ effective organizational practices. Such practices are at the heart of the teaching process and are essential to establishing and maintaining classroom control.

The following set of organizational practices should help to establish effective control of the classroom by the teacher:

1. Get off to a good start.

The first "honeymoon" encounter between the teacher and the

students is when they formulate their impressions of the teacher. Students sit quietly, raise their hands to respond and are generally well behaved. The teacher is easily misled into thinking that this is an ideal class and may relax their vigilance. Students within a week will begin to test the waters to see what they can “get away with”. It is during this period that the effective teacher will establish the expected ground-rules for classroom behavior.

2. Learning School Policies.

Prior to meeting the class for the first time, the teacher should become familiar with school policies concerning acceptable student behavior and disciplinary procedures. The teacher should definitely know what the school expects from both student and teacher in regard to discipline.

3. Establishing Rules.

Establish a set of classroom rules to guide the behavior of students at once. Discuss the rationale of these rules with the students to ensure they understand and see the need for each rule. Keep the list of rules short. The rules most often involve paying attention, respect for others, excessive noise, securing materials and completion of homework assignments.

4. Overplaning Lessons.

“Overplan” the lessons for the first week or two. It is important for the teacher to impress on the students from the outset that he or she is organized and confident of their ability to get through the syllabus.

5. Learning Names.

Devise a seating arrangement whereby students’ names are quickly learned. Calling a student by his or her name early in the year gives the student an increased sense of well being. It also gives a teacher greater control of situations. “JOHN,

stop talking and finish your work" is more effective than "Let us stop talking and finish our work".

6. Be Firm and Consistant.

A teacher can be firm yet still be supportive and friendly with students. A firm teacher can provide an environment where the students feel safe and secure. Many teachers report that it is easier to begin the year in a firm manner and relax later, than to begin in a lax manner and then try to become firm.

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SUPPLY LIST/GIFT BASKETS

GRADES: K-12

This list was developed through the contributions of THT Guest Book readers. Thank you to all who helped develop this list!

MATERIALS:

See below

METHOD:

If you are a new teacher, use this list to help you compile the supplies you need. Ask first if any of these items are available from your school before you spend personal money on supplies.

If you are an experienced teacher, consider making a gift basket of some or all of these supplies to help out your new colleagues. Each person in your department might contribute a few items to make a new teacher much more prepared for his or her first day!

ESSENTIALS

a box each of ink pens & pencils

pens for grading in a variety of colors – not red

calculator

post-it notes

file folders

Kleenex

hole punch

pencil sharpener

paper clips

a stapler & box of staples

lined & blank paper

scissors

a grade-book (MS Wizard also has some good PC grade-sheets)

erasers

VERY HELPFUL

headache medicine

apple or a candy bar

a bottle of waterless hand cleaner

markers

12″ and 3′ rulers

gummed reinforcements for 3-holed paper

pencil erasers

a pencil holder

a small clip board

a key ring

a tote bag

a personal a coffee cup or beverage mug

5×8 index cards

hanging files

push tacks

calendar

NICE EXTRAS

small size legal pads

small screwdriver for glasses repair

safety pins

small sewing kit and tool kit

show boxes to contain things on shelves

a list of teacher websites

pins

teacher-tack (sticky stuff for bulletin boards- can be found at Longs or Albertsons)

card stock scraps (found at PIP or Kinko’s-bindles for $1)

a counter-bell (for getting class attention)

scalloped bulletin-board borders

two or three sets of punch-out letters for displays

different lesson-plan formats to photocopy or change to meet needs

planner labels that say “PERSONAL PROPERTY OF____”,

book-ends

in/out stackable trays

diary

Koosh balls-great stress relievers and can motivate students by tossing

around class to encourage answers etc.

Tic-Tac Candy

Post-it flag tags

thank you notecards

little index tabs to put on the edge of a grade book

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Special idea from Jill Klein:

An idea for a teacher friend is to buy some of those clear plastic envelopes that hold an 8 1/2 by 11 piece of paper. These have 3 holes to put in a 3 ring binder that you can also buy for him. Have him put his seating charts in the individual envelopes. Then, with the vis-a-vis pens you buy him, he can mark down each period who is absent (with an A that's circled), put tally marks on it for those who have been asked to speak that day. When I taught jr. high, I had 3 rules: Cooperate, Anticipate, and Participate. If a child didn't have homework, pencil, paper, etc., they

got an "A" (no circle) for not anticipating. (If they asked someone else for a pencil, not me, I didn't mark it down, but if it was flagrant (yelling "Who's got _____?", I did.) If they didn't cooperate in a small group, they got a "C", and if they didn't answer a question I asked, or couldn't because they were goofing off, they got a "P" written on the seating chart where their name was. If they got all 3 that day, they got a note home. If they didn't, they didn't, and I could write the attendance in my grade book before wiping the envelope with a damp rag. It was an easy way of keeping cool and it didn't take up time or leave any student feeling embarrassed because their name wasn't up on the board.

I also wrote a thought-provoking open-ended question that had to do with our subject or our topic of the day on the board, and they got 10 minutes (out of the 90) to write down their thoughts about the question. I took attendance then. Then, I called 5 or 6, and made a check mark on the seating chart, so I knew who I had called on for the question. I did not erase the checks (which I placed next to the name), so I'd be sure to get everyone before I erased all of the checks. If someone

did not write on the day I called them, and they hadn't written anything, I'd mark an "AP", because they hadn't anticipated being called upon, and a "P" because they couldn't participate! It rarely happened, but one student is all it takes for everyone to jump in and write those first few minutes! I also would not give a check, because they would have to still speak up on another day (maybe the next)…they can't get out of public speaking in my class!

TEACHER SURVIVAL KITS & STUDENT WELCOME BAGS

GRADES: K-6

SURVIVAL KITS

Have a student teacher or a secret pal? Give him/her this little survival kit. Place all items in a brown lunch bag along with this handout:

1. When it spills, wipe it (paper towel)

2. When it cries or sneezes, dry it (tissue)

3. When it bleeds bandage it (Band-Aid)

4. When it needs a hug and a kiss, give it (candy kiss)

5. When it rips, pin it (safety pin)

6. When it's sour, sweeten it (pack of sugar)

7. When it's wrong, erase it (eraser)

8. When it pounds, soothe it (aspirin)

9. When it hurts, grin and "bear" it (bear sticker)

10. When it’s important, write it down (note pad sheet)

11. When it’s a good day, chalk it up (piece of chalk)

12. When it’s a bad day, ask God for strength and hope for a better day tomorrow (nothing is found in the survival kit for this need – it comes only from the heart and soul of the teacher).

13. When it’s gossip, cut it out and dispose of it (word gossip on a sheet of paper with cutting dashes around it)

WELCOME BAGS

Place the items described below in a brown lunch bag and include this handout:

The items in this bag have special meaning:

The cotton ball is to remind you that this room is full of kind words and warm feelings.

The chocolate kiss is to comfort you when you are feeling sad.

The tissue is to remind you to help dry someone’s tears.

The sticker is to remind you that we all stick together and help each other.

The star is to remind you to shine and always try your best.

The gold thread is to remind you that friendship ties our hearts together.

The rubber band is to remind you to hug someone.

The penny is to remind you that you are valuable and special.

The toothpick is to remind you to “pick out” the good qualities in your classmates.

The bandage is to heal hurt feelings in your friends and in yourself.

The eraser is to remind you that we all make mistakes, and that is O.K.

The life saver is to remind you that you can come to me if you need someone to talk to.

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IDEAS FOR NEW MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHERS

GRADES: 6-9

1. In order to teach, you must have control over your classroom. This does not mean you should act like a dictator. If you try to teach without establishing control, then the quality of teaching will suffer.
2. In order to have true respect, you must give it. This does not mean that you accept undesirable comments in the classroom nor does it mean that you can run a classroom without some consequences.
3. In order to have discipline there will be consequences for bad decisions. This does not mean that consequences must be harsh to accomplish its job. Harsh consequences do not accomplish much except for breeding hatred. Consequences should fit the offense. Often the natural

consequence is the best.

4. In order to be the authority figure in a classroom, there is an imaginary line that you shouldn’t cross. Does that mean you cannot be a friend to your students? No, it means that if the friendship gets in the way of education, then it has crossed the imaginary line. (For instance, others may see such conduct as playing favorites and it could undermind your relationships with them.)
5. A teacher cannot always be fair, but should strive to fairly apply the rules.
6. A positive classroom will accomplish much more than a classroom that is filled with negativism—don’t threaten your students.
7. If you discipline in anger, your judgment can be in error. Learn to be calm in the face of problems. It will be a healthier approach for you, and your students will learn from your problem solving abilities. Don’t take your students’ remarks personally—students at this age may hate a teacher one day and love him/her then next. It is a sign of their age, not their overall opinion of the teacher.
8. It is important to act, not react. Give students choices—for example: 1. You may leave the room and go to . . . . .(a pre-selected place—maybe another teacher can provide a time out corner if you don’t have a time out room). 2. You may stay here and make changes in your personal choices. 3. You may stay in the room, but change your seat to an area where you agree there will be fewer problems.—When you give students choices, they have power—power to make a good choice and continue receiving instruction.
9. If the emotional and/or physical well being of a student is at risk, then the offender should be removed from the room—no choices.
10. If teachers copy the discipline style of another, it may not fit them or their classroom. Classroom control, like

teaching, requires personalization—what works best for your is what you should do.

The above list is generalities that work. Think about using them…. Whatever you choose, keep a positive atmosphere in the classroom.

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BULLETIN BOARDS:

AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE CLASSROOM CURRICULUM

GRADES: K-12

Every year I receive numerous requests for bulletin board ideas from our readers, so I thought it would be a good idea to start the year with some basic bulletin board concepts.

Bulletin boards can be basically divided into four distinct categories:

- Informational Boards
- Philosophical Boards
- Curricular Boards
- Show-off Boards

INFORMATIONAL BOARDS

Informational boards are those devoted to given schedules, procedures, and the dreaded class rules.

Most of these boards are very straight-forward, but the rules charts that seem to plague every classroom, needs some comment.

Your rules chart presents your students with the atmosphere of your classroom—unfortunately, most of them are negative rules. Here are some examples, and the possible reaction in a student's head:

> ***NO HITTING, PUSHING, FIGHTING, RUNNING*** *(The teacher thinks that we're going to act up.)*
>
> ***SIT SILENTLY IN YOUR SEAT AND RAISE YOUR HAND*** *(The teacher is the dictator here and/or we're being treated like little kids.)*

Whereas this was extremely basic, you can get the idea. I recommend that if you need to have rules posted, they be positive rules, acknowledging the students' common sense. Some examples:

> ***RESPECT EVERYONE IN THIS ROOM***
> ***RESPECT EVERYTHING IN THIS ROOM***
> ***RESPECT THE WORDS*** *(for a Language Arts class)/**NUMBERS** (for a math class)/**LIFE** (for a biology class)/**MUSIC**/**ART**/etc.*

Subsequent classroom discussions can go into what "respect" really means, based on that particular class, with those particular students, at that age. In that way, all of the "negative" rules can be discussed without being posted in front of their faces all year!

PHILOSOPHICAL BOARDS

These types of boards usually contain commercially produced posters with sayings that make the students “feel good.” Try not to use those that are overly corny—especially if the kids are older!

Posters with special messages are often effective. One of my favorites is a colorful poster called “How to be an Artist”. It has short phrases such as…splash through puddles…take naps…etc. Another really good one is “All I Ever Really Needed to Know I Learned in Kindergarten.” These type of posters get the students thinking, and give overly good feelings after reading them

CURRICULAR BOARDS

This is my favorite type of board. Your bulletin boards are excellent opportunities to cover material that you do not have time to cover in your regular classroom curricula. This could be different subjects of interest, or supplemental material.

An example of this comes from when I used to teach early American history. When I covered the U.S. Constitution, I posted a completely cut-up LIFE Magazine from 1989. They published a Constitutional Bicentennial edition all about the signers, history of the document, amendments that failed, and what life was like in the United States at that time. I cut out every interesting article I could find (I hadbought two copies for front and back), and posted articles on a couple of bulletin boards—all information that I would never have time to cover in the class. The articles were short, and the pictures were interesting. The students loved it. Bulletin Boards are great educational tools that are often not used as such.

SHOW-OFF BOARDS

By far the greatest use of Bulletin Boards, especially in the elementary grades, is to show off the students' work. Whereas this is great for ONE or TWO boards, it's also very damaging to many of the students—and the teacher is rarely aware of it. Next time you post your students' work, do the following classroom self-esteem check:

A. Look around the classroom at the various student work that you have displayed. COUNT how many pieces of work come from:

- ABOVE AVERAGE STUDENTS (ACADEMICALLY)
- AVERAGE STUDENTS
- BELOW AVERAGE STUDENTS

B. In the three categories that you counted, where is the work displayed?

- PROMINENCE IN CLASSROOM (front wall, back wall, etc.)
- POSITION (center of display, outer edge)

C. How many of your students have NO work displayed at all? How many have more than THREE pieces of work displayed?

A student's self esteem is influenced more than you think by something as simple as work displayed on the bulletin boards.

Hopefully this will give you some ideas as you complete the bulletin boards in your classroom. If you have any specific ideas for interesting bulletin boards, please send them to me. I will be running a number of Bulletin Board Ideas in this Topic of the Week in the next weeks.

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A COLLECTION OF BULLETIN BOARD IDEAS:

THE BRAG BOARD

You want teachers to make sure not to hurt anyone's feelings or self esteem by what is put on the board and the number of papers each student has up. My remedy to this is to laminate a sheet of construction paper (one for each student) and allow each student to tape on "their" construction paper the assignment or grade they want to "brag" about. I send home papers each Monday, so when the papers have been seen by the parents and returned we replace last weeks paper on the wall. We have called it our brag board and last year I used the "Caution-Great Minds At Work" theme with hard hats and all to promote our hard work. No one had any hurt feelings since we each chose what was to go up on the board (test, homework, daily grade, etc.).

submitted by Amelia Whitaker

FALL INTO A GOOD BOOK

MATERIALS:

- large paper tree

- assorted paper leaves in fall colors (I used die-cut machine)

Have children place on a leaf the name of a book they have read, the author, and their own name. I also added books I read, and had the principal and several others in the building and the community place their names and books they had read on a leaf.

submitted by Maureen Hoffman-Wehmeier

GET TO KNOW THE TEACHER

MATERIALS

- pictures of the teacher, his/her family, interests, vacations, or whatever the teacher wants to share with the class

Mount your pictures on the bulletin board with short comments about each one. For example: This is me with my husband. This is my dog, Spot…etc. You might put samples of hobbies you enjoy if they lend themselves to mounting on a bulletin board. A picture of you involved in your hobby would certainly do! Share with your students the first week of school!

submitted by: Mary Hannon San Jacinto Elementary School Galveston, TX

GETTING' "ANTSY" FOR SUMMER

I cover my board with a checked, plastic table cloth (like you would use for a picnic). Then I make several ants with chenille legs, and spread them around the tablecloth. I put up creative writing stories – My Life as an Ant – but you could put up just about anything.

submitted by Sonya Gibson

GOT HOOKED ON GOOD GRAMMAR

I put up color cut outs of tropical or goofy fish. On the fish I post common grammar mistakes along with corrections. I then drop hooks (covered in aluminum foil) near the mouths of the fish.

submitted by Sonya Gibson

GREAT WRITERS OF THE WORLD

I split the board in half vertically or horizontally and on one side, in large letters the title: Great Writers of the World. Underneath I just have an assortment of names of great writers of all types, poetry, plays, novels. I usually just arrange them in a jumbled fashion. On the other side of the bulletin board, I put the words Great Writers of the 6th Grade. I use this side to put their creative writing assignments. I usually also give extra credit, if someone can give us some information about any of the writers I have put on the board such as biographical information, their famous works, etc.

submitted by Denise Fullerton de Gomez

GUESS WHO WE ARE

This bulletin board can be used any time of the year and helps students and the teacher get to know each other. You need baby pictures of the teacher and the students. Before school starts I send my students a Welcome to my Class postcard (but this could be done any time during the year). I ask them to bring a baby picture of themselves on the first day of school. I

collect all the pictures (make sure you have their names on the back). For their language arts lesson the first day of school I have them take a 5 X 8 inch index card and describe themselves without giving their names. I then attach the description to the baby picture and put them on the bulletin board. Give the bulletin board a title such as Guess Who We Are? and watch your students have fun guessing who their classmates are.

Variation: I used this on a hall bulletin board using baby pictures of all the teachers. I gave a prize to the student that guessed the most correctly. After a couple of weeks I posted the teachers names beside their picture.

submitted by Marna Wirth

MATH ADDS DIMENSION TO YOUR LIFE

I begin with a stick drawing of a person. Next to it, I put a "better" stick person made of black string, stapled to the board. Finally, I end up with a 3-D (really cool-looking) person on the end.

submitted by Sonya Gibson

MIRROR, MIRROR ON THE WALL, WHO'S THE COOLEST CLASS OF ALL?

I put up a cut out of the wicked queen looking into the mirror, which is covered in aluminum foil. On the mirror I put a class picture.

submitted by Sonya Gibson

OTHER SHOW-OFF IDEAS

You can use fans (the handheld variety) around your bulletin

board and promote your “Fantastic Work.” I was able to find some kids play fans with feathers. They look really fancy with a tassel on the end. I found them at a closeout store, Big Lots. My mother loves chocolate, so for Christmas someone found a HUGE Hershey’s chocolate bar. I swear it was a 20 pounder (probably only 5 but it was heavy). Anyway, I saved the wrapper to use in a bulletin board for “Sweet Success.” I haven’t used it yet, but it’s there if I need it.

submitted by Amelia Whitaker

OUR BEST WORK

MATERIALS:

- strips of paper, per student
- examples of the students best work

The children “design” the borders of the bulleting (by supplying them with stips of paper) which is theirs to “personalize”. This will allow for creativity. Each child will have a designated “section” of the board in which he or she may display their individual work. Each week or so, each child will have the opportunity to display the work he/she is most proud of. Each child will have the opportunity to display “their best” (as defined by themselves) and you will never run out of ideas or things to place on the board! The BEST is always displayed!

submitted by: Esperanza Basulto, South Gate, CA

PERSONALIZED LICENSE PLATE BOARD

MATERIALS:

- personal student photos

- a DMV application
- template of license plate
- stencil letters

During the first week of school students make personalized license plate posters which include a photo of themselves. I went to the DMV to get one of their applications and then wrote up the assignment sheet using their rules (i.e. no more than 7 digits, etc.). Then I gave the students a template for the frame that our state uses and a Xeroxed stencil of letters and numbers for them to use. The most important rule was the phrase on the plate had to reveal something about their personality; it couldn't just be a name of a favorite team or person. I gave the students one day in class (they had lots of fun brainstorming with each other) and two days at home. As students decided on their phrase I wrote it on the board—this meant that it had been approved and no one else could use it. After collecting the posters, I created a huge collage on the back wall of the classroom with all (170+) posters. This helped me get to know the kids and became a gathering place for students to check out all of their friends.

> *submitted by Laurie Hagberg Village Christian High School Sun Valley, CA*

POSITIVE BULLETIN BOARDS

MATERIALS:

- varies with class and teacher

You don't have student work at the beginning of the year but you want friendly bulletin boards, none of the "don'ts" (don't talk etc.). I use pictures of my past students and classes put all over a board and banner it a "few of the reasons I teach". Kids enjoy seeing kids they know. Parents

enjoy seeing past kids and I've been teaching so long everyone enjoys seeing the past styles and the way I've changed and the places I have taught. It also gives me something special to do with all those pictures, and is a quick and friendly bulletin board to start off with.

submitted by Lynda Juencke Scott Computer Magnet Topeka, KS

RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS

MATERIALS:

- several large paper apples (I used die-cut machine)
- header (see above)

Have the children watch their classmates perform acts of kindness. When an act is performed, the child who sees it should come to the teacher with the information. An example is: Johnny helped Mary clean the scrap paper off the carpet. The teacher places that information on the apple and staples the apple to the bulletin board.

submitted by Maureen Hoffman-Wehmeier

READING TAKES YOU PLACES

In my class if the students complete their quarterly book projects, I take them on an outing, the movies, bowling, beach party, skating, etc. Each reading period, I put some type of computer created picture with 8 lines for them to fill in the 8 books they have read. For example, if I'm going to take them skating, I make a roller skate. For bowling, I made bowling pins. Each student has their own figure, with his/her name on it that they fill in during that grading period with the names of the books they have read.

submitted by Denise Fullerton de Gomez

SPARKING INTEREST IN A TOPIC

MATERIALS:

- varies with topic and class

Another important way to use bulletin boards is to spark the children’s interest in a topic. I often use them as I start a topic or project to get the kids thinking about what we will be doing, or the book we will be reading. For example, I started an advertising topic with lots of different advertisements on the board, with lots of questions around, e.g. ¨Which ads do you like and why?¨, ¨How do people think of advertisements?¨, ¨Do you think the ads your parents like are the same as the ones you like?¨ ¨Are any of these ads racist or sexist?¨, etc. If I start a book, I may use the bulletin board as a starting point, posting quotes from characters, info about the author, and in an interesting way- the gate from ¨Charlie and the Chocolate Factory¨ for example, complete with lock and chain. I also try to make them 3D if possible. I started a sports topic with several bits of sporting equipment hanging around and tacked onto the board, photos of athletes and team stats, and of course questions to get them thinking. It´s always refreshing when I hear the kids asking each other the questions I place on the boards, or when they ask me. For example, the other day a boy asked me ¨Miss Laura, do you dream in black and white or color?; from which sprang a detailed discussion, and when I looked at my bulletin board on ¨Dreams¨ there was the question. Then, as the topic takes off and the class is producing their own work, I take down bits of the bulletin board and add their work.

submitted by Laura Kennedy, The Grange School Santiago, Chile

STEPS TOWARDS A GOOD YEAR

MATERIALS:

- construction paper

Have children trace around each other’s foot. Have each child write on his/her foot behavioral goals for a good year. Place feet and heading on the bulletin board. Make the feet look like they are walking around the board.

submitted by Tonimarie Simone

THERE’S NO PLACE LIKE HOME

MATERIALS:

- post cards, pictures, sayings, etc. of your home state and/or community

Since our home is New Hampshire, I will put a large map of NH on the bulletin board. I will surround this with post cards, pictures, sayings… that have to do with NH. Above the map, the caption will be THERE’S NO PLACE LIKE HOME. Beside this it will say: YET, THE WORLD IS OUR DOOR TO ADVENTURE. I decorate it with pictures, post cards, sayings and anything that has to do with the new places we will be studying for the year.

submitted by Carol James Dover Middle School Dover, NH

WALL OF WORDS

MATERIALS:

- red construction paper shaped like bricks

As a way to motivate students to increase their vocabulary each day at least one pupil must add a brick with a new word on it to the WALL OF WORDS. The brick is simply made with red construction paper outlined with black (use your imagination). It will be motivating for students to watch the wall grow along with their vocabulary. It is simple and it works!

submitted by Sandra Lanni Montreal, Quebec

WHAT A "GRAPE" BUNCH

You need purple, green, and brown construction paper and markers. Directions: Cut out purple circles for grapes. Put each students name on a grape. Add stem and leaves. Make 3 dimensional by adding vines. Cut long strips of green paper. Loop "vine" around and staple.

submitted by Lisa O'Leary

WHO IS WHOOOOOOO?

MATERIALS:

- construction paper owl
- lined school paper

Have each child write about themselves without putting their name on the front. (Add name to the back). Staple to the owl, and place on the bulletin board with the header. Children guess who is whoooooo!

submitted by Tonimarie Simone

WHY I LIKE SCHOOL

MATERIALS:

- construction paper
- sequins, scrap material, beads, baubles, glitter, yarn, buttons
- cut-outs of people
- a cut out star for each child

Give children a cut out of a person on multicultural or plain white paper. The children are to make the cut-outs look like themselves. Hang the cut-outs on the bulletin board in a semi-circle to resemble holding hands. Have each child write on a star why he/she likes school. Hang the star over the cut-out of the author.

submitted by Yolanda Gonzalez

WWW.FRIENDS.CHAT.COM

This bulletin board can be used as part of a friends theme or in the computer area. Children's writings about their new friends are displayed on the board. Make a large poster or chart of an animal/child with one outstretched or open hand. Colored paper cut-outs of telephone receiver. Curled paper cut-outs for phone cords. Letters for words: "www.friends chat.com

Select background colors that match the character, animal, or child poster or child you choose to use. I chose a turtle that comes ready made as a chartlet. Center the title at the top of the bulletin board. Make a pattern by drawing a picture of a simple hand-held telephone receiver. Trace this pattern onto several colors of construction paper, making one for each student. After cutting them out, write a child's name on each one in bold marker. Choose one coordinating color for the phone cord. Using the same color as the letters for the title works well. Cut strips of paper and curl on a pencil to make

phone cords. Attach these to paper phone receivers. Place one in the open hand of the character. Scatter the others around the board leaving room for their papers. Have the students write about a new classmate or what they talk to their friends about. Put each students written work with their phone and staple the cord under the paper!

submitted by Dona Paull

YOUR FUTURE IS IN THE PALM OF YOUR HAND

I put up a HUGE picture of a hand. I draw in the love line, life line, etc. Using string, I connect these lines with their new labels: attitude, effort, responsibility, etc. (Another option – label thelines: math, reading, social studies, etc.)

submitted by Sonya Gibson

YOUR TWO CENTS WORTH

We have a teaching store which has cut notepads in the form of pumpkins, ghosts, etc. In the Des Moines Register, we have a section called Your Two Cents Worth. People write in on opinions they have on anything. The kids take a piece of paper from the notepad and write their opinion about something.

submitted by Kerry Beveridge