

Topic of the Week: BULLETIN BOARDS—AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE CLASSROOM CURRICULUM

(Sorry—formatting is messed-up a bit, and I couldn't fix it without redoing entire section)

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 had bought 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.

submitted by

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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 strips 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 the lines: 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