

Tips from Teachers

This is the second collection of Tips from the teachers on the Primary Success e-mail list.

The best ideas come from teachers. These are ideas that are 'tried and true', ideas that really work in the classroom. Every teacher makes a good idea his/her own and adds a special touch - as you will do if you use any of these great ideas.

I have not attempted to do much editing, and I have not tried to sort them - so the list is close to what I received from you.

Thank you so much! This is the best kind of teacher cooperation.

Jean



"One thing I do is the first month of school I let them pick where they want to sit, of course if there is a problem I can move them around, the next month I pick where they sit, then the next month is their turn again. They like this and try hard to stay close to a friend. I also assign who gets to pick the story everyday, both in the a.m. and p.m. and everyone tries hard to be on time or they get skipped until next time."

Ruth

"To keep anecdotal notes on students and notes from parents organized I use a binder. In the binder is a set of alphabetical dividers where students are filed by their last name. Each student has a sheet with all personal info on it that I get from the office. Then I record all my notes on the child and add pages as the year progresses if I need to. Behind this page I insert a page protector for each student. I store ALL notes from parents regardless of what the note is about. It is so easy during the year if I need to check on something or look back at what a parent requested. I never lose any notes from parents this way and all my notes on students are in one place."

Louise

This is not my idea but one I got from a workshop. I have used it often and the children like it. It's called "Reading Train". I have the children sit side by side as if they are on a train. The children on the left are 'a' and the children on the right are 'b'. I ask 'a' to begin reading to 'b' and when I want them to change I have a wooden train whistle that I blow. Then 'a' moves ahead one person on the train and 'b' now reads to 'a' or I have them stay seated with that partner and 'b' reads to 'a'. If you have an uneven number of children, the teacher takes a turn on the train also.



Another idea is using the brightly coloured plastic display boards from the teachers' store for private offices. If a child needs less distractions or is disturbing others put one of these display boards on their table or desk so they are better able to concentrate on the task at hand. I always refer to them as private offices. All the children like them and will often ask for an office to do their work.

Donna

I collect work in numerical order (based on alphabetical order). Each child in my class has a number. This means that when they hand in their work in arrives in order and I know immediately if anything is missing. Then I can place the children's marks directly into my mark book in alphabetical order. I find that this saves me a lot of time.

Lisa

Since last year, we have given each student a looseleaf scribbler with a computer graphic and title : My Homework Calendar glued onto the front of it. At the end of each month the student brings in this scribbler, which we peruse (semi-mark, as it must go home that night) This has brought up the rates of student participation in the program, and keeps all their work in one spot!

Karey

I put my students extra supplies in a large Ziploc (which they bring from home) labeled with their name. This holds it all in one place. I then store the bags in a box, in an easy to reach location, and the students can either get their own, so I get it for them. They have to ask me before they go into the box. I have done this for the past 3 years, with great success!

Colleen

I make small name tags for my students by backing small sticky note paper with manilla tag, laminating them, and gluing magnets on the back. I print the child's name on his/her tag and place all the name tags on a table for the beginning of class. When the children enter the classroom in the morning, they need to find their name on the table and place their name tag on the magnetic white board I have attached to a bulletin board. This helps them learn to recognize their name and others in the class. It is also a quick way to determine who is absent before I do a formal attendance. On the white board, I will print words, such as "Boys" and "Girls" under which they need to correctly place their names. They soon learn to recognize these words and develop some graphing skills as we talk about the number of children under each category. I also use these name tags when the children choose which center to go to. I use a large pocket chart with the name of each center in a different pocket. Students must place their name tag beside the center name of their choice. When a center has four name tags beside it in the pocket chart, the students know that center is full and they need to choose another one. This method also helps me quickly locate a student who did not clean up a center when it is clean up time.

Nicole

When I am organizing my Grade 1 classroom in August, I make a box of materials that I might need when I get a new student during the year. I put in any notebooks or workbooks that we use throughout the year. I add all the notes that I send home in September about reading, writing, spelling, Math and the reading program that I have set up in my classroom. I add blank name cards, birthday cards etc. so that everything is in one place when the new student arrives. This is a simple thing that takes no time to organize but can save a person time and frustration later in the year.

Kathy

How to spell "because" (a particularly annoying 2nd grade word):

b-e-c-a-u-s-e

u-s-e

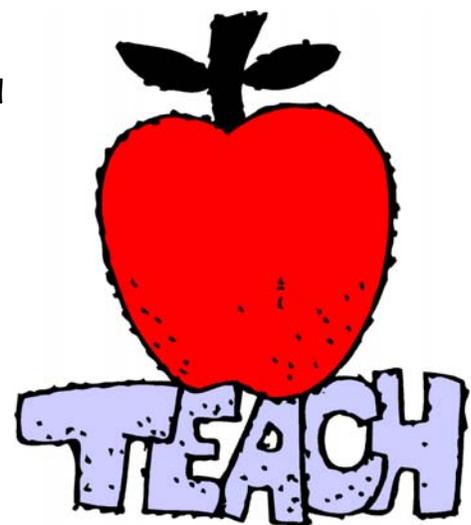
u-s-e

b-e-c-a-u-s-e

because, because, because

(to the tune of Mary Had a Little Lamb)

Jenny



* I have a class with quite a few behaviour challenges and personality conflicts amongst the students, so I try to do activities to build class community. Every Wednesday is designated as Secret Buddy Day. They print their names on a paper, and with their back turned to the rest of the students (so as not to look directly AT the person whose name they have just drawn!), they draw a name. I put my name in the draw too. We brainstormed ideas of things to do, such as picking up things under that person's desk so as to keep our room cleaner, push their chair in if they have forgotten, smile and say hi, excuse me, thank-you or ask them to play, let them go first in line etc etc. At home time, we spend a few minutes saying who was our secret buddy & smile at them. It is a huge hit.

* To help build class community, we have two parents come in and make Taco Day happen, at lunch, once a month. The students go into self-selected pods; each pod is responsible for bringing pre-cooked taco meat mixture, shredded lettuce & chopped tomato, grated cheese, carrot and celery sticks, and cut up fruit for dessert. We rotate pods monthly.

*To help the students settle ASAP after Recess and after lunch, I read from a chapter book. They do NOT want to miss.

*To build class community, there is a VIP once a week, on a rotating basis. I have an bright matting from a picture, and they bring photos to put inside it, and also 'things' to put in front on it, on the shelf. They give a little talk about themselves via their 'things'. We all learn a lot about each other.



* To build class community and for me to get a sense of where each student is on Monday mornings, we sit on the carpet, and go round the circle saying what number from 1-10 we feel inside, and then give one positive and one negative, if any, from our week-end. This is time consuming but it is so valuable! We take about 15 minutes and I would not NOT do it again. I follow this up once school gets underway, until the end of Oct (ie: so as to hit Parent-Teacher conferences), a "Touch Base" duotang. Each double page has: pg. 1 - about 15 feeling faces, labelled and about 5 blank faces; pg 2 - divided into quarters, horizontally, with a blank face in each quarter, on the left. First thing in the morning, again after Recess, right after lunch and again just before Home Time, they draw in the face according to how they feel, then write one sentence I feel _____ because_____. It gives a good inside look at how they are all adjusting etc and leads nicely into friendship skills and also conflict resolution skills .

*Reading Buddy time: two buddies cruise about watching how students stay on task, help the little buddies with reading strategies, share their book etc. These two students pick ONE set of buddies for the Buddy of the Week, at the end of the session. The prize is a 6" strip of border trim, with a ribbon tassel, for each to have as a book mark. They go about with a clip board with the criteria, discussed beforehand, on it. The new names are added to a chart with their names, and is posted in the hallway.

Shary

When my Kindergarten children line up for the hall we sing a song that requires us to put our 'finger on our lip and our hand on our hip'. The song is:

Put your finger on your lip, on your lip.
Put your hand on your hip, on your hip.
Put your finger on your lip,
And your hand on your hip.
Put your finger on your lip, on your lip. Zip. Zip.



(The tune is "If you're happy and you know it".)

The children then walk the hall in this position and it keeps them focused on what they are doing and the destination they are off to.

For fun, we sing the song in different voices. (ie. sometimes we are quiet as a mouse, sometimes loud like a giant, sometimes 'crackly' like an old person, etc.)

Another cute variation of this is calling the class to line up and say "PEACE and QUIET". The children line up and walk the halls with one hand showing the "PEACE" symbol (two fingers up) and the other hand puts a finger on the lip for "QUIET".

Lisa

We play 'Magic Spot' for cleaning up at the end of the day. Students will do anything for a jelly bean. When I say magic spot they find every scrap on the floor, every desk is straightened, every table top is clean. When the room is presentable I call everyone to the meeting area and announce the magic spot winner.

Sandy

Idea for a small book

I have done this with various grades and it is a great way to bring out the humour in your classroom

I give the class a topic... What if you found a dinosaur in your backyard and he wanted to have a sleepover or go to school with you? How would you get him ready for bed? on the bus?etc.

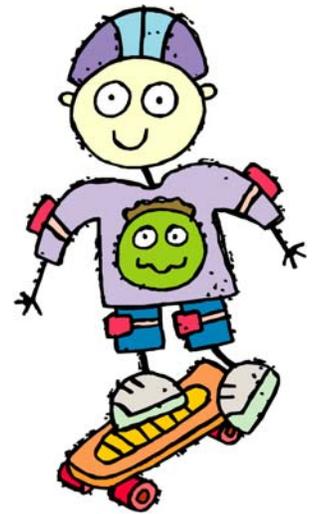
I start it off and then go around the class and each student contributes a sentence. Each sentence is a progressive flow of the story. I go around the class more than once. Once we have completed the story, each child illustrates his/her sentence. Once this has been done, they either write their sentence somewhere on the page or I provide a type written page for them to draw on instead.

For example...'Davie had a great time skateboarding on the sidewalk as the bus drove down the street.' (the student draws a picture of Davie (the dino) on a skateboard with a bus going down the street

'People flocked to their yards, cameras flashing as they watched me going to school on the back of a dinosaur!' (the student illustrates this on a page)

I compile these into a book and display it.

Janice



My best classroom management for tidying up (especially after an art lesson that involves a lot of paper cutting) is to have three "magic spots" around the classroom. The children move like lightening to pick up the paper or to put away a piece of equipment in hopes that they cleaned up in one of the three magic spots. Three children end up receiving a prize. Usually the prize is a sticker. I get 100% clean up participation and the class is cleaned under two minutes.

Mary

Something most of our teachers are using for lining up and walking down the hall. We say ("Hand on Hips, Quiet lips, Walk Don't talk!") This is said together with students.

Sandy

When I want a yes or no response, I have the kids show me thumbs up or down so that everyone gets to answer. They love it and if they're not sure their thumb goes sideways.

Gail

My Favourite Spring Bulletin Board

I did this bulletin board last year and it turned out wonderful. It was a cumulative bulletin board that we added to over a month or two. We added new ideas as we changed themes. I don't have a picture of it at the very end but attached is one about half way through.

I started by covering the bulletin board with light blue on the top and brown on the bottom. We made birds and spring flowers to begin with. We added the roots to the flowers as part of our plant theme. We then added what lives under the ground and above the ground. We added burrows under the ground for rodents and made little furry rodents out of fun fur, the kids LOVED these! We also later added gummy worms for other animals that lived under the ground. Later on we did an insect unit and added a number of different insects from ladybugs, butterflies, dragonflies, etc. We also added ants and ant hills.



The overall effect was really incredible. The kids loved the process of creating such a unique bulletin board. I'm sorry I don't have a photo of it once it was completed but this one part way through gives an idea of how it looked. I think this was definitely my favourite bulletin board.

Catherine

My "signal" to come to the carpet (circle) area in the morning is "O Canada" I have a tape with a fabulous orchestral accompaniment. When I'm ready to start the day, I press play...and when the intro starts, they all quickly clean up whatever they were doing at their tables and come and stand on their spots and lustily sing O Canada with me. It's a wonderful way to start the morning. Being Kindergarten, they can't read the words, but it took them no time to learn through daily practice. It's so great to have them all stand there singing.

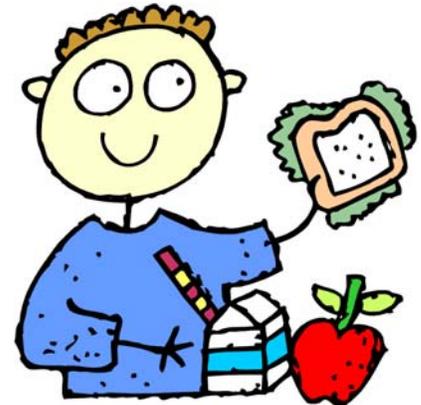
Daphne

Here are some things I've learned as a result of Reading Recovery and the training that I'm currently in.

Children who are struggling readers have many confusions when it comes to literacy. Those confusions need to be dealt with in a friendly but prompt manner or else they linger into bad habits, almost impossible to break.

b and d confusions seem to be most common. Never, ever teach or work with the two letters together. Deal with one confusion at a time. Have the students make it, say it as they make it (something simple like down and around), do b races, how many can they make in a minute, etc.

Instead of tic tac toe with x o do it with b and f (or another letter but not d). Have the students come into contact with this letter in many forms: magnetic letters sand letters, salt, chalkboard, paint, etc. Consistency is the key. Work on that one confusion for at least a week if not two.



Theresa

I can share one idea I use to help kids think of something to write about for Writer's Workshop. Since I teach first grade, it is often hard for the kids to think of a topic. We use the Lucy Calkins Units of Study curriculum for writing so the kids do a lot of writing about events they have experienced - personal narratives. When a child says he or she doesn't know what to write about, I have the child think of connections made to stories he or she has read or that have been read aloud in class. Since making self-to-text connections is an important comprehension strategy we use a lot during reading, the student can almost always remember something he or she did or experienced. I try to elicit more than one idea so he or she has choice.

Anne

I have found a successful way to have children give thought to their behaviour and practice printing at the same time.

At the beginning of last month (I teach Kindergarten), I introduced Apology Notes to my class. I have pre-printed the note with lines:

Apology Note

Dear _____

I am sorry that I _____

Next time I will try to _____

Your friend

The children tell me what it is they have done, and more importantly what they could do next time to better handle the situation. I like the fact that they have to take the time to figure out a better way to correct the behaviour. I find it is very successful in my room.

In Language Arts, while I cannot take credit for the original idea (I heard it at a workshop put on by Miriam Trehearne. She told a story of a teacher who to encourage her students to write in a grade 1 class brought in a stuffed cat. My husband found a large Scooby Doo thrown out, I cleaned him up and he sits in my class. He has his own stationary - one set for the kids to write him notes and one set for him to reply on. When the children write to him, he writes back. Kids write to him daily and writing to Scooby will become one of my centre activities. The kids have made him a bed, a collar, a food bowl - he is going to teacher convention with me this week as I wont be around to write to them.

Carolyn

A Math Tip

I teach Grade one and every morning we have Math first. One of the required skills is counting by rote .. starting from variety of starting points and using a variety of "by". Counting by ones, by twos, by tens.

We do morning exercises and count (loudly). First by ones to 100 (we march, then change up the exercise at every group of 10). We count by 10's (leg lifts work well). We punch the air, using the nastiest face we can. Hard not to laugh when the teacher is doing it too.

If we ever miss this (because of assemblies or whatever), my children really notice. They are fully awake after our morning exercises.

Jane

My favourite game for PE is a game called "Dead Ants". It works for students of mixed ages and abilities. It provides a way for students to catch their breath without dropping out of the game and students use cooperative strategies to keep the game going. Equipment: 2 red pinnies. In a group of 20 or more students, 2 are chosen to begin as the Pesticide people. They are "IT" and on a signal, they try to tag as many students as they can. If played outdoors, a boundary needs to be set up to play within. When an "ant" is tagged, it lays down on the floor with arms and legs held up in the air. Other "ants" may become safe from the Pesticide people by stopping and holding on to one leg or arm of the dead ant. When there are enough ants (4) holding on to one limb each, they may carefully lift the dead ant over to a circle in the middle of the playing area. This is the "ant hill". This is symbolically bringing food to the community. The dead ant and its rescuers may now leave the circle and rejoin the game. Everyone in the circle is safe from the Pesticide people until they leave the circle. They may not stay in it for a long time, but this rarely happens. All ants and Pesticide people must stay out of the circle unless they are returning a dead ant to the hill. The Pesticide people "win" if they have tagged all of the ants except 3, which means that no more ants can be returned to the hill. I usually change the Pesticide people every 5 minutes or so to keep anyone from becoming too tired out. There are no losers to speak of, so everyone has lots of fun and gets lots of exercise. I have played this game with about 20 students from K-7 on a cold day when there were very few students, and it worked beautifully.

Linda

Management - My colleague and I use a couple of plastic dishracks (purchased from the dollar store) to store paperback books for themes. I also use them to store ziplock bags that have phonic or math games inside. They work great for storage.

St. Patrick's Day - Our K/1 class will have a resident "leprechaun" that leaves little footprints, leaves notes, loses pieces of clothing and even takes a bath in a toy bathtub (leaving the water green) for the week leading up to St. Patrick's day. The kids love this! They leave notes and traps to catch the little guy. No success yet! The writing that comes from these activities is wonderful. He even leaves a shiny rock with a gold shamrock painted on it with a little poem that goes like this:

Tuck me in bed.
Turn out the light.
Lay down your head.
Sweet dreams tonight.

I have had parents of former students tell me that their children held onto this rock for years after Kindergarten.

Lorna



My favorite Easter art project is paper mache eggs. Ahead of time make rings for stands (stiff paper or one year I cut old icecream buckets into rings and stapled them closed. Because they were plastic they lasted for several years.) Blow up balloons into an egg shape. Tape the knot down as flat as you can. Paper mache the first layer with any paper (I use newsprint). Narrow torn strips mold over the balloon best. Smooth the paper, place in the stand and let dry. Cover the egg with another layer of paper. This layer should be paper that is plain or the print/designs might show through on the final product (I use paper towels). Dry. Paint the egg one colour. Dry. Decorate the egg with other bright colours and designs. Dry. An adult then cuts an opening (I make it zigzagged, like it cracked). The opening needs to be large enough for the child's hand to fit inside. Each child fills the bottom of the egg with Easter grass. Just before they go home I put in candy.

**Remember to crisscross the layers of paper when applying them on the balloon.

Sharon

I have my class listed alphabetically by first names on the wall. I divide the class into 5 groups "A" "B" "C" "D" "E". When I need quick groups for an activity, all I need to say is "A" group go to the back, "B" , to the front... When we are lining up or dismissing, I sent them out to the bootroom in their groups. The special helper's group always gets to go first.

A quick and easy Easter activity: Make a heart (brown, white, black or grey). Turn it upside down (the point is up) Add long ears and draw on a rabbit face. Cut out thin strips for whiskers and glue on.(or draw on the whiskers) These can be made big for the wall or small to glue onto the front of a card.

Louise

I give each child a number (alphabetically) for the whole year and use this for lining up at anytime. I also use name plate cards cut in half for attendance in a pocket chart. I switch up what I have written on the cards throughout the year e.g first name then surnames, telephone numbers, address, birthday etc. I do cheat when calling out the cards to test the children knowledge of each piece of information I write the child's name in the corner on the back so I can check or help when needed. Something else I did at the end of each day is at the door I ask each child if they would like a hug or a handshake as they leave for home.

Cathy



Management Ideas

1. Once the children have lined up to leave the classroom during the day I have them

"Put large fluffy pillows on your feet." We actually tap each foot.

"Put a large handful of marshmallows in your mouth." We pretend to put a handful in.

"Put your eyes on the back of the head of the person in front of you." I joke with them about watching out for twitching ponytails and to check that the person brushed their hair that morning.

"Put your hands at your sides until we are on the stairs, then your right hand holds onto the rail."

This has worked for many years for me with both *Grade Ones* and *Twos*.

2. We play the quiet game when walking in the hallways. They get a point if no one talks during each part of our walk. My classroom is on the second floor. They can earn a total of 4 points; 1 for the hallway to the stairs, 2 on the stairs, and 1 for the hallway to the gym/library/computer lab, etc. They love it as they never know what the reward is.

3. The "Special Helper"/Leader for the day is at the start of all lining up lines for the day. The next day they are the "caboose". It gives them responsibility to remember their job for the next day as well there are no "slowpokes" to be at the end. I find this has been an issue in recent years. Actual slowness to be last or even pushing other children ahead of them so that they are the last in line. Very sad. Having an assigned caboose has helped.

4. I have even had them line up alphabetically by last name with the day's Special Helper leading and the previous day's one being the caboose. A few parents have commented about this both positively and negatively. I try very hard to encourage and support the children in the choices they make when lining up but some years choice has to be very limited due to behaviours and safety issues for all.

5. Having a "special" basket to hand in notices, permission slips and money, etc. from home has greatly helped in preventing "The teacher misplacing it first thing in the morning." When I have time to focus or concentrate on what it is I am reading and handling I have found that I am better able to keep track of the items and do so in a more timely manner. The children learn very quickly to simply say "I've put something in the cow-basket Ms. G." I also put the basket on my carpet chair so that I can quickly scan through the items to see if there is something that needs my attention immediately before we start our calendar routine.

Pamela

One thing I do is a magic scrap for tidying up. I tell the kids there is a magic scrap and the person who finds it gets a prize. My floor has never looked cleaner!! :).. I usually keep track of which student wins so that I can make sure everyone gets a turn to win (I often have to 'cheat' so that everyone gets a chance to win). Most kids don't pick up on it.. and every once in awhile I will let someone win twice so it isn't as obvious!

Nicole

I give every student a number and they have to remember that number as we use it for everything. We always line up for Gym in "Number Order" So number 1 is the line leader and the next day is the caboose. There is no more arguing about who gets to be in the front of the line or who gets to be in the back.



I also give each row a color. Red, Yellow, Blue Green. That way when I call everyone to the back corner or give rewards all I have to say is "Yellow row, you're first". Works like a charm!

Traci

I keep monthly calendars where I do my monthly planning and keep them for a few years to refer back to in order to see if I'm covering all that I have in the past.

Inside my storage cupboards I keep all those important schedules/phone numbers for staff and students so if I need them I know exactly where they are and can quickly get what I need.

I don't use planners in Kindergarten, but I do use folders that go home daily. I think it's a better way to communicate with parents than having children stuff newsletters/work/artwork in their back packs. And often parents put the library book in it, weekly poetry book and home reading book in it. Very useful!

I have the children keep their "outside" shoes outside of the classroom and their inside shoes in their cubbies. At the end of Kindergarten they take their shoes off on the carpet and they never wear their inside shoes home!

PE - we play toilet tag - 2 taggers who run and tag children. When tagged the child need to bend on one knee and put out their arm and can get "flushed" by another child to get back in the game. The kids LOVE it!

When we count by 5's we high five the air (on the 5's) and clap on the 10's. The kids catch on really fast with this pattern of clapping.

St. Pat's day - we marble paint with green paper, gold gold paint (dollar store) and marbles in a box lid pre-cut shamrocks and add gold glitter while still wet.

We also colour a styrofoam cup green with black trim on the bottom - put it in the oven on a low temperature and they shrink up quickly to become leprechaun hats!

Meghan

I number the students in their alphabetical order. Students put their name and number on their papers. It is easier and faster to put papers, RC's, and work into order by their numbers.

They line up this way to stop budging in and fighting. The order rotates each day, with the change of the star of the day. Ex: 1st day line up starts with #1 and goes to #23. 2nd day starts with #2 and goes to #23, with #1 at the end. 3rd day starts with #3 and goes through all students, ending with #2, etc. They all get turns being first in line.

Numbering helps to make quick teams and to help teach odd and even numbers. It also helps teach quantity, counting on, what number comes before and after, etc. I number their supply bags and math bag equipment (which they each keep in their desks), so we know whose piece any loose item is.

I ended up having to assign each boy to a girl to sit beside. The boys were uncontrollable during calendar and presentation times, frequently fooling around and not paying attention. Sitting boy, girl, boy, girl has helped with listening skills. Now, anytime they 'forget' and sit boy, boy, I send them to their journals to write out the rules for sitting at circle time. Writing the guidelines from memory seems to help them internalise the ideas and it enhances their writing abilities.

Last year I started a snowball game in gym they absolutely love to play. I choose a small portion of the gym with lines for two courts and a neutral centre part. The class is divided into two teams. Each team decides on a captain and a co-captain. The captains are the only people who are permitted outside the court lines and into the centre part. Each student gets a beanbag. On the said Mark, they start tossing beanbags at the other team. They may only aim for below the waste. Once hit, that student is out and cheers on the rest of their team. The captains may go out of bounds to fetch beanbags for their team. The last member (or timed for greatest number of students left standing), wins. I don't give away any strategies. I watch to see the strategies develop. Even the meekest students love to play this game. The captains can be hit and out too. That proves real challenges for the captain-less team. The game is active, challenging, fulfilling, and a problem solving, thinking, strategy- building, self-awareness, cooperative activity. They love to debrief any problems, likes and dislikes. Here is my best attempt to indicate the courts:

I (court 1) I (centre) I (court 2) I
Students are in courts 1 & 2 and toss through the centre at the opposite team. There are side boundaries too. If students go outside of the boundaries, they are automatically out, to cheer on their team.

Marilyn



Lining up in alphabetical order from last name in a grade two class was a wonderful launch point for more alphabetizing in class. The majority of students understood personal connections to alphabetical order. I have used their lining up to emphasize who would go in front or behind multiple students with the same last initial of their name too. Next in group reading I designate one student as teacher the other as student. The 'teacher' must ask three questions for the 'student' to respond to, past the yes or no with a because sentence to support the learning of the student. Of course the roles are switched after the reading of each story.

Favourite gym game:

A variation on Dodge ball - when you get hit you go onto a bench that is placed in the other teams playing zone. (Not too far off center for young players - my class is grade one) The players that get hit stand on the bench on the opposite side and player from their team have to throw them the ball and they have to catch it to return to their side again. The kids love it and it also improves young children's throwing and catching abilities as they really want to catch the ball to return to their team. (I sometimes join the team that may have a lot of players on the bench and catch and hand over the ball to release players from the bench.)

Another favourite:

I call it Mr. Knickerbocker. You only need to use 1/4 of the gym for primary students. I cone off one end and make a "jail" (blocked in with benches) in the corner. In the coned off playing area scatter torn pieces of yellow construction paper (lots of small toonie size pieces). We call this Mr. Knickerbocker's gold. Mr. Knickerbocker and two guards are in the playing area to protect the gold. On go the rest of the class tries to run into the playing area and take the gold and run out and return it to the "Gold Keeper" (the teacher with the bag). If the children get tagged while in the playing area by Mr. Knickerbocker or the guards they must drop the gold and go straight to jail. Once the jail is full we start a new game and change guards and Mr. or Mrs. Knickerbocker. I usually just continue to collect the gold until it is gone which is usually around the end of gym period. You could always keep putting it down as the kids are quick to collect it all for you at the end of gym period. Kid's love this game. You can add as much imaginative dynamics to it as you want.

Creative Writing:

Read the book "Imagine a Day" to your class and then brainstorm and partner share your own "Imagine a day ..." The students then write their own and illustrate their writing. The book inspires creative ideas and the illustrations are amazing!

Tonya

1. For lining up I ask them to have peanut butter lips, marshmallow feet, smiling like angels (that gets them to focus on no talking, walk quietly, and smile.. i.e. have a positive attitude)...gets the ideas across and seems to work.

2. In gym at the close of the lesson I pick the special helper to do Follow the Leader (on the white line) incorporating some action from the P.E. lesson such as action then a balance position, etc. That gives me time to put the equipment from the lesson away. They love being the leader and having all the children copy them!

3. At cleaning up time in the classroom from any activity or at the end of the day I play "Secret Spot". I pick one or two items out of place in the classroom and the children all tidy up putting everything away where it goes. They don't show me their items but I watch to see who found the two out of place items I picked. At the end I announce the winners and they get a little treat, a sticker, jewel, etc. It really gets them cleaning up!

Victoria

Best Bulletin Board Idea! USE CLOTH for the background. It's recyclable, it's washable and if you put out an announcement there's so much old cloth in people's attics and I have found they do share. Plus for the \$ you can get vibrant REUSABLE theme prints from discount stores.

Use counting and touching fingers in a teepee shape to calm students and cross the brain - It works!!

Kaye

I teach grade primary which is an all day kindergarten class. Here is an idea that has been working for me for years. Using students' names alphabetically I divide them into days of the week. Each day has its own colour. When it comes time for show and tell and helping, the blue folders, Monday, are the helpers that day; and orange on Tuesday, etc. I also use each group for taking turns to bring in treats for special occasions so parents are not asked each time.

Monday (Blue Folders) Hallowe'en, **Tuesday (Orange Folders)** Christmas,
Wednesday (Green Folders) Valentine's Day, **Thursday (Red Folders)** Easter
Friday (Yellow Folders) End of the year

Another idea that I do is scan the students' work and post it to web site. Each child has their own page. Parents love it, students are proud of it and it helps show parents how their children are doing. Before I had a scanner in class I used my camera and took pictures of their work.

<http://hrsbstaff.ednet.ns.ca/njtaylor/studentswork.htm>

Norma



Our Primary staff uses Friday Folders as a way to communicate with our students' parents on a weekly basis. They are just made out of a file folder that is decorated by each child. I have enclosed the letter that we put on the back of the folder. It is a great way to send work home. It seems to get more notice than sending it home every day. Parent teacher interviews are easier because the parents already have an idea about how their child is doing. Any missed work or unfinished assignments go in there as well as well as important notices. It is also handy when a parent comes in at the end of the day for homework for their sick child. I just reach into the folder and pull out some work



This is not our idea, we found it on the net about 6 years ago, but it is one of our better organizational tools.

Parent Letter for Friday Folders

Friday is a special day for our class. Every Friday the children bring their Friday Folders home. Inside these special folders you can see all of our work for the week. Important notices and the school newsletter are also placed in the Friday Folder so it is important that you check through the folder each week. A calendar will be attached inside the folder for you to record the nights you and your child have read together.

I ask that you review the work with your child and then sign one of the boxes on the front cover of the folder. Please return the folder to school on Monday. If you have any comments, please attach your notes to the outside of the folder. You may keep the completed work that is in the folder. If your child has been absent or for some reason has missed some work, it will be placed in the Friday Folder. Please have your child complete any unfinished work as soon as possible and return it to school.

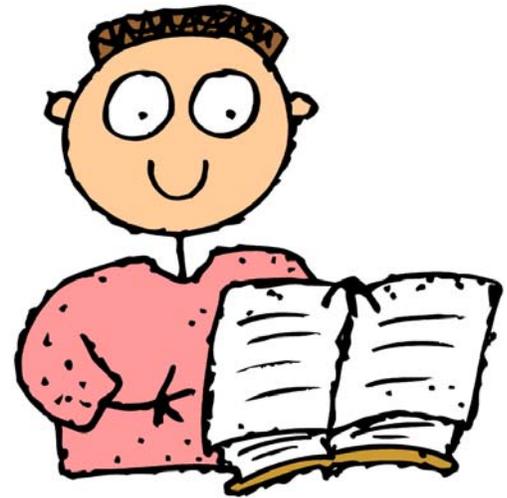
Folders are collected Monday morning. The entire process is then repeated on Friday. This is a valuable tool to keep home-to-school communication open, and it helps you see what your child needs to work on. It is important that it is returned on time and not lost.

Martha

I don't know if the blog qualifies as a class web site, but here it is:
<http://www.missowensblog.blogspot.com/>

Audrey

We also do Big 5 Math each morning. The children are given 5 math questions to work on as they arrive in the classroom in the morning. They work on them on their own until everyone has settled down. Then we go over the questions together, discussing how we solved it, what strategies we used. We point out when someone used a different strategy so that they learn there is more than one way to solve a problem. If they have difficulty with a skill we teach them some strategies to solve it and then make sure there are more questions like that until all are able to work with that skill. It is



very none threatening, everyone helps each other to solve the questions. The children correct any mistakes so that at the end of the lesson everyone's paper is correct. We use questions that cover all of the math strands. It is a good way to introduce the skills in an informal setting so that when it comes up in the math lesson they are already familiar with the concept and are able to work with more confidence.

Here's a quick one: For Mother's and Father's Day, I keep a list of the gifts we make for the parents each year, taped to the inside of my file folder...that way if I have a sibling, I know whether or not the mom or dad has already received a certain craft from one of their children.

One thing that I have found working with Kindergarten and Grade 1 students for years is that they often remember things better if we sing them. For example to help them remember word families we might sing, "i-n-g, i-n-g, i-n-g spells ing,ing ing. (to the tune of The Farmer in the Dell).

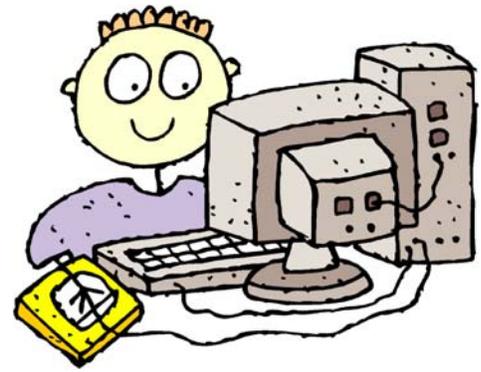
A wonderful resource I heard about this fall that encourages children to practice good manners is a teachers' guide book, CD and posters. The songs are lively and engaging- my class loves them! We often play freeze dance with the theme song "Good Manners". (I turn on the CD and when I stop the music, anyone who does not freeze is out.).

The program is: Manners: Matter & Character Counts For Kids by Judi the Manners Lady

www.themannerslady.com

Donna

1) Give every student a number (i.e. 1 - 23) at the beginning of the year. I go in alphabetical order. I use this number to identify their communication folders, their section of my work sample folder collection, my anecdotal note binder, etc. I make sure the kids know them and we practice lining up "in our order". For a fieldtrip or fire drill it is easy to see who is missing - I just get them to number off. It doesn't take long to memorize their numbers (longer for me than for them) and they can tell me "Johnny is missing".



2) Use a yellow highlighter pen to mark my "original" of any sheet I don't want to accidentally hand out to the class. I usually just make a few wavy lines and if the kids get it they say "I can't use this. It has yellow all over it" and I gratefully take it back.

3) Class parties - I do 3 per year - usually Halloween, Valentines and either Christmas or a year end. I divide the class into 3 groups (one per party). I assign each child to bring either a "healthy snack" (fruits, veggies, crackers, sausage, etc.) "sweet snack" (cookies, cupcakes), one child to bring some chips/cheezies, and maybe one to bring a few juice tetra packs. I always supply juice and cups. This way I don't get too much food, parents know they only have to help out once, and I keep a balance of what we get for food.

4) Gym games - We were taught "Every body's it tag" recently. That's all - just everybody is it. They run around like crazy, trying to tag everyone. I usually tell them to either keep track of the number of people they tagged, or the number of times they are tagged. We only play for about 10 minutes (with a break in the middle to see how many times they've been tagged) but they love it.

With the new DPA (Daily Physical Activity) requirements here in BC, I've been trying to get my kids outside for a bit of extra exercise at least once a day. Their favourite activity is "Follow the Leader". It started one day as I was trying to kill a few minutes and I lead them up, over and through the playground equipment. They thought it was quite funny to see the teacher climb the ladder and go down the slide and over the rock wall. Now I divide them into groups of 3 and let them loose. Every few minutes I blow my whistle and yell "New leader" and the original leader goes to the back of the line and someone new takes over. I try to highlight interesting moves I see them doing ("I see Olivia walking backward", or "I see Jason doing two foot jumps") and then others start.

At our school we have the volleyball nets up 2 days a week during volleyball season. We do a lot of throwing and catching exercises (over the net, under the net), we get out the badminton rackets and balls and scoops.

"Bean bag war" - divide the gym into two sides using a line down the middle. Divide the class in two teams. Toss bean bags (or playground balls) out to both sides. Start throwing (we do underhand only with beanbags). If you get hit, instead of going out, you just change teams. No one is ever sitting and if one team is looking dangerously low in numbers I join in!



One hint with doing stretches - I have a Jehovah's Witness student who is not allowed to do Yoga. I talked to his mom and he's not allowed to do the exact Yoga stretches (since I've never taken a class I really don't know what they are exactly anyway) but he can do stretching. So, I just never say the word Yoga - we just stretch. The kids love to show stretches they do at dance class/soccer, etc.

5) Class management - I divide my class into 5 groups at the beginning of the year. The job chart includes: couriers (hand things out and collect them for me), custodians (use the brooms/dustpans I have to sweep up the worst of our mess, check the recycling containers, clean the brushes), movers (stack chairs) and librarians (tidy the book shelves). Each group is assigned a task for the week, the fifth group is "off duty" unless I need extra helpers.

6) I have a coffee cup with popsicle sticks in it. Each child's name is on a stick. Also, grade 2s have a red dot, grade 3s don't. If I want to randomly call on students I use the jar. If I want to partner students up, I use the jar. If I need to have 5 kids come up at a time to get supplies, I use the jar. Basically, anytime you want to keep the kids on their toes or make sure you are picking fairly - use the jar.

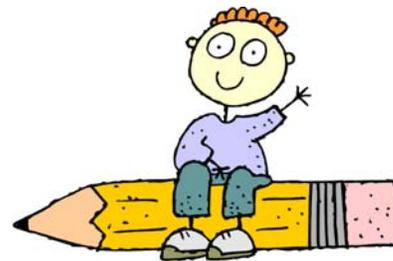
7) Spelling - try to set any "doozer" words you can (especially for the grade ones and twos) to a song. Anything with 5 letters can be sung to "Bingo". "Because" can be sung to "twinkle twinkle". Jean, you remember the story about L.D. to spell "would, could, should", don't you? The other best idea I got from Primary Success years ago was a one page list of all sorts of ways to chant the words (using different voices and actions). My grade 3s roll their eyes a little, but the grade ones loved it - and it worked!

8) A favourite winter art project - I assign art homework! Once a year I give the students a large piece of white paper. They are to draw the biggest snowman they can on it, and cut it out. Then they are to work with their families to decorate it any way they wish - using whatever their parents will let them. Many come back with food glued on (Cheerios, noodles, nuts, seeds, marshmallows), they use yarn, lace, fabric, ribbons, buttons, bolts, pennies, cedar sprigs, etc. Anything goes as long as it's okay with their parents. I send home a note saying they are supposed to work with their families, but not to let mom/dad get too carried away and do it all because they are having so much fun. They are almost always terrific (although you do get a few dumplings who don't get much parent support and could use some extra time at school to fancy it up). Sometimes I challenge them to think - "What job would your snowperson have?" How would he/she be dressed?

9) The best stories I get from my students have always been as a take off of a well known, favourite book. This year we had BC author Linda Bailey talk to the kids and read her "Stanley" the dog stories to them. Then she challenged the kids to write their own. Because they knew the character so well, they were able to write amazing stories.

Heather

I award group points for good behaviour which I tally on the board. On Fridays I award a treat to the winning group. We switch groups each week.



Warm up: 4 corners. Teacher numbers the corners of the gym from 1-4. - teacher picks a "caller" who covers eyes & counts to 10; teacher blows whistle & says "Freeze; corner #" and the student picks a # -all the students in that corner are eliminated & sit in the centre of the gym. Game continues until there is one person left who becomes the next caller.

Another warm up: Ship to Shore (this is an oldie!): Teacher calls out commands & class follows them with actions. We usually do a few minutes of playing before we start eliminating. Commands: bow, stern, port, starboard, man overboard, submarine, dinner time, captain's coming, 2 men in a boat, 3 men in a boat...

Trick to remember how to spell "because": big elephants can always understand small elephants.

Also, the word "friend" always ends in "end."

Check out my website: <http://www.nvsd44.bc.ca/staff/ST/SewardS10619.aspx>

Suzanne

Here's something for phonics blending. I am a Learning Assistance teacher and I have a group of students in grade 1 who know all of their letter names and sounds, but have great difficulty with blending. I have started to see some lights go on with this method though. When a student says the letter sounds in a word individually we call that "reading like a frog" because they are 'hopping' from letter to letter. To make them slide the sounds together (as I have been following in your Phonics program), we call it "reading like a snake". It seems to help them understand the idea of making the letter sounds more of a chant, sliding the sounds together.

Linda

Organization tool - I number everything! The children all have a number according to their place on the class list: e.g. Jenny Adams is No. 1, Johnny Zane is No. 20 and I number their notebooks, coat hooks, everything. It's very easy then to put collected Journals into a pile and see whose is missing. It also gives interesting ways for kids to line up - e.g. give a math equation - $20 - 5 = 15$ then the child who is number 15 lines up. Anyway, probably everyone does this but I find it very helpful.

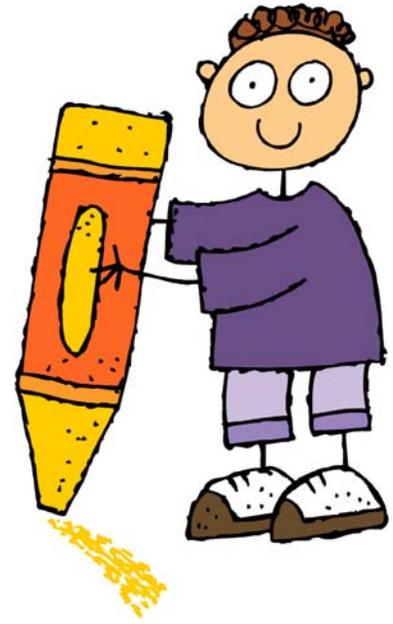
On Valentine's Day, my job-share partner and I have done ice-cream sundaes the past few years. We provide the ice cream and bowls and spoons, and the students bring in their favourite toppings: sprinkles, chocolate chips, mini marshmallows, chocolate or strawberry sauce, whipping cream, smarties, etc. It's lots of fun, and they have "just enough" to eat, not the cupcakes, cookies, cheese and crackers, etc., etc., that they don't really need in the afternoon, after having lunch!

Every week, in addition to our daily "Special Helper" who takes Attendance, reads on the cozy couch with a friend during OTTER (Our Time To Enjoy Reading), etc., we have a "Child of the Week". I send home a letter on Friday letting parents know that their child will be Child of the Week (COTW) next week and that they will have special sharing jobs to do. On Monday the child recites this poem:

In all the world there cannot be
Another person just like me
I am special

Then I "interview" the COTW. He/she sits in my rocking chair and I ask them questions which I answer/write on a special wipe-off chart (from teacher's store). We find out their full name, age, birthdate, family, pets, favourite colour, book, movie, TV show, sport, hobby, toy, animal, pizza topping and then ask "What

makes you happy?" and "What are your proudest accomplishments"? (These are funny sometimes and vary from learning to read, tie shoes, make their bed or just "I don't annoy my mom very much lately"). Then on Tuesday, the COTW shares baby pictures (or up to their present age) with the class and we put them up on the COTW board, on Wednesday they bring something they have made (a picture, a craft, etc. - I always say how much I like home "made" cookies and once a year or so we actually get them!), on Thursday, they bring in their "favourite" thing and then on Friday they "teach" the class something - a word or phrase in their home language, a song, poem or whatever. This is a very special week for Grade Ones and they absolutely LOVE it! We get to know even the shyest children just that little bit more and it's a wonderful opportunity for a child to speak before the class and just SHINE. I highly recommend it and thank my first job-share partner, Leanne, for the wonderful idea!



We have a "Super Reader" home reading program in our class (of course, doesn't everyone?) I put black and white, matted photos of my class up around our "Super Read bulletin board, and every time a student has read 10 books, I put a star on their chart and for every 50, 100, 150, 200, etc. they get a large star beside their name, a star to wear that day, announcing that they are a "Reading Star" and I put an announcement in the window for all the parents to see, such as "It's not just hearts we see this week, we also have stars: Simon has read 100 books! Danika has read 150 books!" We make a big deal in the class that "Faatema has now read 100 books!" - we clap and cheer, she takes a bow and she gets a "Super Reader" certificate and prize (the prizes grow in size, with the more books read). My son, who is in a more affluent neighbourhood and school, doesn't understand why my students get prizes for home reading, for monthly homework, etc., but in my inner-city school, it's definitely something we need to do - begin with prizes and incentives and work our way up to more intrinsic motivation -many of our parents do not impart the knowledge to their children that reading and doing their homework is just "of value", so we must begin with the child and eventually my students do seem to show pride in the achievement of reading, more than the mere reward. Our Super Reader bulletin board is checked out each and every day - it is bright and colourful and I love hearing kids congratulating each other as they count the stars they have achieved on the chart.

TAKE PHOTOS of your students!! It can be very costly, but it is SOOOO worth it! Recently, at our Student-Led Conferences, a mother was looking through her daughter's scrapbook and said "Oh! Thank goodness you take pictures, my camera was stolen". Many of the parents in my school don't have money for cameras, so the photos I give them are indeed very precious! You needn't be a professional photographer - kids are SOOO happy to be photographed! Just mat them on coloured construction paper, crimp the edges sometimes and voila! Take pictures in September, on field trips, on the the playground, with their painted pumpkins, at Christmas time, during Centre Time, on skating trips - it is amazing in June to look back at the September photos and see the changes in First Graders.

Lesley

The children in my grade one class wrote an emperor penguin report.

We gathered facts on webs.

I modelled how to write a paragraph.

We ordered the facts.

The children gave the sentences. We used a thesaurus to change overused words (lots of voting for which new word to use).

I wrote the paragraph on the board and then onto lined paper. I photocopied the paragraph for each of the children and then they copied it onto paper using their best printing.

I made sure the children knew where to start the paragraph and put a checkmark beside each line they were to write on. The paragraphs needed to be double spaced.

The children had to draw and colour a picture for each paragraph. The picture needed to match what the paragraph was about.

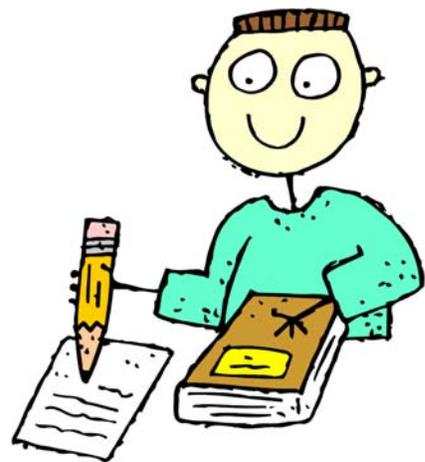
In the end the children each had a five paragraph report.

They also got to make a paper maché penguin thanks to a very artistic teacher who came in to help.

We entered this into the school science fair.

I also read Mr. Popper's Penguins to them.

This took a lot of work, but the children know a lot about emperor penguins now and it gave a good reason for neat printing.



The children know that I like to look for students who are following the class rules. If I catch someone that child gets his/her initials on the board. If I catch that child again, I put a checkmark beside the initials and it means that child gets a sticker. The children can get more than one checkmark, which means more than one sticker. Before I dismiss the children for recess or the end of the day I check to see if I need to give out stickers. They like receiving stickers and for some children this has helped them to follow the rules better. The children keep the stickers they receive in their agendas.



Sue

I find when teaching Kindergarten and Grade1 students phonics we learn only the sound of the letter and lower case letters at first. We start with b ,m, s, t, then a. We begin putting words together for spelling and reading using only these letters and adding more once these have been learned. Most books are written with mainly lower case letters and the sounds will help children learn to read faster.

When sounding out words there should be no break between letters sounds: e.g. cat not c a t . Don't stop saying one sound before you start saying the next one. I have books with just short a words in them at first, then we add short e words and so on until we know how to read all short vowel words before going onto common sight words then long vowels.

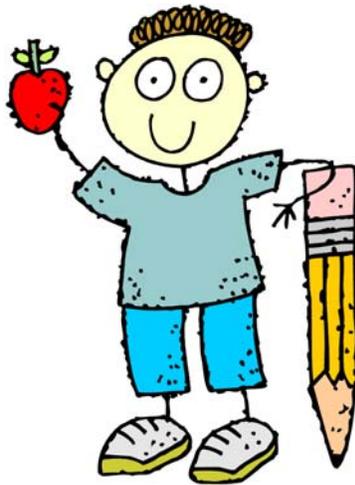
Vikki

Every month I hand out a 8 1/2 by 14 sheet of white paper divided into 32 boxes. The students also receive the same size of coloured (e.g. green for March) paper divided into 32 boxes with seasonal vocabulary. Some words on my March paper are: lion, lamb, wind, crocuses, leprechaun, pot of gold, shamrock, shillelagh, etc. The students cut these out and glue them onto the white paper in random order. I put these words on cardstock and turn them over to play 'bingo'. This helps to increase their reading vocabulary. I teach grade one and two. There are always easy words as well as more difficult words. The students help each other when we play the game. For our January game, the winning student would holler "Snow Day!" instead of bingo.

Marlene

I use popsicle sticks to help the students arrange themselves (in a circle/oval) for the class meeting (Grade 2/3). On each stick I write a number at the top from 1 to the largest number of students in my class (i.e. 20). Then on the flat part of the stick I write a student's name. The name on the stick should not correspond to their student number (if you use these). The class meeting circle is formed by the students arranging themselves by the number on their stick. They should have a stick that has another student's name on it. My name goes on a stick that is blank, this is the "wild stick" and the student that picks this one goes to the middle of the circle and then chooses where to sit once the circle is formed. The students put their sticks on the floor in front of them during the meeting. At the end of the class meeting we do the Circle of Encouragement which is when we go around the circle (I always start at the Special Helper) and give a complement to the person whose name we have on the stick in front of us. The students make eye contact, give the complement, and the complemented student replies with a "thank you". We spend lots of time at the beginning of the year learning about what a complement is and how it should be something related to a person's character. My class really looks forward to this part of the class meeting. It is a pleasant way to wind down the class meeting and have everyone feel recognized.

Nola



Note: There are a few submissions without names - and I may have some of the names wrong..... if you had sent something in and the credit is not correctly shown, please let me know! Jean

primarysuccess@shaw.ca

http://www.primarysuccess.ca/main_ca.htm