

Tips from Teachers

I asked you for tips, and the response was great! I promised to share them, and here they are - with a few removed to go into the September-October Primary Success magazine - chiefly by Rebecca who contributed a terrific list. If your idea is missing, it will appear in the magazine and I promise to share it later.

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 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.

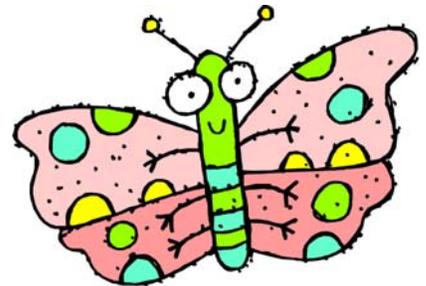
Jean

Labels --- I use them for everything from labelling book bags to notebooks. I can't live without them in the classroom.

In the hallway where students hang up their jackets, I have **baskets** on the top shelf for holding indoor shoes, or once they come in from recess, for holding winter hats and mittens.

Clothes pegs: washroom passes when you are on outdoor duty, also great for holding papers together such as permission forms coming back to school, signed tests, etc.

Gina



I have a type of management strategy I use in my room regarding washroom breaks. Each student gets a colored popsicle stick at the beginning of the year with his/her name on it. When he/she wants or needs to go to the washroom or get a drink he/she simply asks and if it is granted he/she places his popsicle stick in a bucket and does not get it back until the end of the day. This works well because students are only allowed to go to the washroom or get a drink during class time once throughout the day. If the child does not have his/her popsicle stick they are not allowed to go. If the student has been missing the popsicle stick for more than a week he/she may get a new one but if found one needs to be thrown out otherwise they will take advantage of having two!

Rhonda

Label your personal books on the outside (rather than inside cover) in case any go home accidentally, it is immediately obvious who the books belong to.

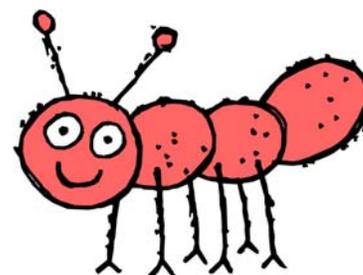
Save those clear plastic containers that hold berries or tomatoes. They make great personal math kits for students. I start each student off with a deck of cards and a pair of dice and as we make more math tools throughout the year, like place value charts, we add them in.

Label things students use for the year but belong to you (or the school) with numbers and then number your students. So all year, Jean is number 1. She uses the number 1 text books, the number 1 math kit etc. That way you know who is using what resource.

Colour code duotangs - blue for literacy, red for math, green for science, etc. It makes it much easier to see if you have all the right books if you are marking somewhere other than your room and it makes it easier for students to find the correct book.

Aleesha

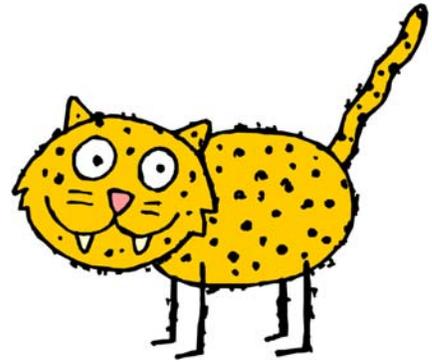
For a management idea, I like to have a home-school connection booklet that I photocopy. It is like the bee books, but it is just a booklet. I make one so there are 4 days total front and back and I staple enough for twenty days or about a month. On each page I have a place for them to write the date, then a section for their behavior for the day, which I check at the end of the day, then a section for them to write down their homework. I have the subject listed and they only need to write the page number or what it is. The last section is for parent/teacher comments and a place for parent's signature that they saw the book that day. They take this back and forth every day and it helps to organize their homework and to communicate with parents.



I do a spring reading/social studies program that really keeps them reading. They get class 'money' for every minute they read. This money is then used to buy plane tickets to travel to another country that we study in Social Studies. On the first day of the unit we set up the chairs to be an airplane and the kids all get a passport. They buy tickets, economy or first class depending on their money. I hand out snacks and give the first class better snacks and pillows and an extra chair to put up their feet. After their plane trip they get their flag stamp of the country in their passports and buy a tour ticket. We use the internet or other resources to explore pictures, songs, food, etc., about the country. The rest of the unit (a week or so) we fill in a map and flag, maybe read a folktale, or do some art or research or other activities to learn about that country. I also fine kids for different things with the money and that helps behavior, too.

Trish / Beijing, China

For home reading I make up a calendar for each month and then put the set of calendars into a duotang. Parents then initial each day their child reads and can write in for how many minutes, how many pages or how many books their child read that day. The children bring their duotang to school once a week for me to record on charts. When a chart is filled up (20 stickers) they get a prize.



This past year was the first time I did this and it worked well until about Easter when I found a number of families slacked off. So I will have to find new ways to motivate those who just don't get into it. But I found tracking much easier to do with this method.

Another teaching tip - I often give my students an index card and then ask them to write down something that gives me a quick assessment of what they have learned. For example in my social studies unit when we have finished learning about the country we are studying I'll ask them to write down 3 things they learned that they thought were interesting. Or in science if we have been studying rocks and minerals I may ask them to write down what sedimentary rocks are. It's quicker than given a test and also a great way for them to practice sentence writing and spelling too.

Cathy

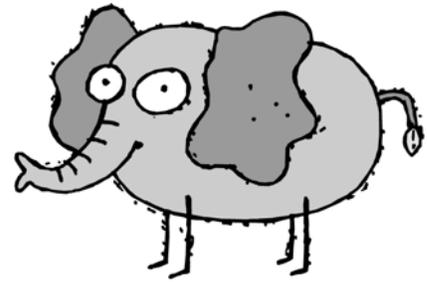
I teach secondary students with special needs who are working at a grade K to 3 level. One thing that I do to help get students started with fine motor and printing is to lead the printing with a yellow highlighter or felt pen. The yellow highlighter will not show if photocopied so you can reuse the master sheet or copy the work to see the printing only. Sometimes I only print the first letter and lead them to their word wall dictionary or help with the spacing and size. Dots help for tracing as well. I will print most of the sentence and leave a blank space to fill in for those following along for notes or journal if they have difficulty with time or ability for fine motor printing. This helps include the students in the assignment along with the other students for inclusion and parallel working. This is certainly not a new idea but it sure helped me when I learned to do this. I walk about the room with my yellow pen and use it to prompt other students during writing or printing as well.

Here is an example:

Today my class went to the zoo. I saw a monkey, an elephant, and a giraffe. My favourite animal was the _____.

Cyndie

I frequent the dollar store. I got my Read to Self (silent reading) book bags there. I could have gotten some colourful mesh bags, Disney handbags, handbags with spots for pictures, but I chose courier bags (used by businesses to carry their deposits to the bank. They zip, they will keep the dust off, and they cost \$1.00.



Debra

Mr. Clean Magic erasers remove permanent felt pen from most things including laminated material. This allows you to use charts for more than one year.

Lynn

Here is one idea that I have for PE. This gym game is so popular that the kids BEG and BEG for it. The compromise is that we play the game once a week, this year it was every Monday's gym class.

Game: Medic (another name is - Doctor, Doctor)

Equipment - 8 spongy, bouncy balls - 4 per team to start the game, 2 pinneys

Divide the gym into 2 areas, designate a line near the end walls and to the wall as the Doctor's Office or Hospital where he is safe.

Divide the students into 2 teams.

Designate one team member from each team to be the Doctor and go to the hospital/office area on their team's side of the gym. I have them wear a green or white pinney so it is obvious who the doctor is. The doctor remains in the hospital/office unless treating a patient. It is their safety zone.

Give each team 4 balls and on a signal they begin throwing the balls across the midline to hit an opposing team member.

Should an opponent be hit they must lie down where they are, on their stomach.

The doctor for the "injured" player must come out of his safe zone (hospital/office) and drag the "injured" player by the foot or hand into the hospital/office without being hit by a ball. If successful the "injured" player may rejoin the game. If the doctor gets hit by a ball the other team gets a point and new doctors are chosen.

Later on in the year, I add a challenge. If a team member throws a ball and an opponent catches it the thrower is deemed "injured".

Students throwing skills, judgment skills, strategizing as a team, and sportsmanship all develop over the course of the year. Enjoy!

Sheila

I am happy to tell you a few things that work for me...

1. As someone who is lucky enough to be able to hold a tune, I use this skill with my Kindergarten kids. When we have finished in circle time and are ready to go back to our desks to do some work, I always count them to a number they choose (between about 3 and 10), but I count by singing! I just sing each number either with a scale of a few notes, or high, or low, or even rapping! The kids then copy every number after me, and they love it 'cause it gives them a chance to sing every day.



2. I keep all my old tissue boxes and collect the toilet paper rolls and old newspapers/ scrap papers from around the school (with help from the janitors), though I don't keep them for craft; I put them in a big box, along with some glue, tape, scissors, pipe cleaners and the like. I give the kids a theme (usually what we are doing that week), and their task is to work in groups and create something from that theme with all the stuff in the box. For example, if the theme was the Ocean, they had to make something out of all that stuff that lived in the ocean, or had something to do with the ocean. I had a group of 6 year olds make me a submarine once!! Talk about surprising!

3. My kids love my Story Bag. Once in a while I bring out a green velvet bag which has assorted 'stuff' in it, and I have to take out one at a time and make up a story out of it all. Its a good idea to have a picture of a person, or a doll, or a cuddly toy animal or something to pull out as your main character, but after that, anything goes! It can be a bit tricky, but if I get stuck, my kids will jump in and help me make up the next part of the story! They like it because it is so unpredictable, and the story is always different.

Katharine in Hanoi, Vietnam.

Here is a great idea that I use several times each day! I print each student's name on a popsicle stick and store these in an attractive jar or container on my desk. I use them for many purposes to make sure that everyone gets a turn to speak in class!

I pull one stick at a time (or get the students to pick), at sharing time, calendar time, or any subject at all that when we are having a discussion. This takes the pressure off kids who think they need to be first to raise their hand every time and helps these kids learn to think before they answer as they know their 'turn' will come when I pull their name. It also reassures the quieter students because they know they do not have to compete with the 'keeners'. Everyone gets a turn and my grade 2's feel this is a fair and friendly way for them to contribute each and every day! I will have close to 30 students this coming year and I want to make sure that each one feels that they can speak and be listened to by their classmates and the teacher!

Marg

I teach Grade 1-3 Special Education in St. Albert, Alberta. Yes, all in one class! My teaching tip is probably something others do but I find fun and very effective to get the students back on task or to pay attention from a time of transition. As the students are at their desks, or not at their desks, I start saying in a calm and even-voiced (not too loud or too soft as I want all students to hear what I am saying) voice, "If you're listening touch your head, if you're listening touch your elbows, if you're listening touch your toes, if you're listening wiggle your nose, if you're listening bottoms are on your seat with your feet under your desk, if you're listening mouths are zipped, etc." I will say things like that (and trying to rhyme as best I can on the spot with each direction) until all students are in their desk and I have their full attention. Then I will carry on with my current lesson or next lesson. Using "Simon Says" to the same commands works well too.

(My apologies - I did not put the name with this.... J.)

I think every teacher knows the game of 7-Up.

I play a variation with my Grade 1 French Immersion students, and it works equally well at any level AND for any topic under review. All students really enjoy playing.

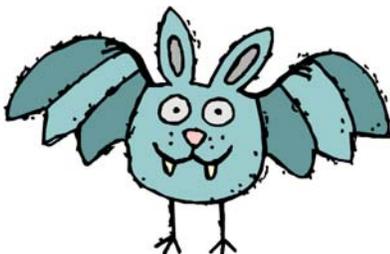
I call MY version Cinq (5) Debout (5-Up).

The Star of the Day chooses four classmates to stand up front with him. Heads down and thumbs up. Once five thumbs have been pressed down, I call out "Cinq debout" and the children stand beside their place.

I call upon the first child and hold up a flash card with one of the sounds from Jolly Phonics. If the student states the sound and makes the action correctly, he has TWO guesses as to who pushed down his thumb. If he is incorrect, the class as a whole gives the answer, and the student is then allowed ONE guess as to who pushed down his thumb.

I tend to play this game during those last five or ten minutes before dismissal.

Penny

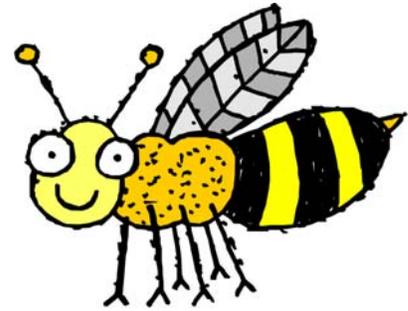


Secret Workers: Secretly pick two workers and write their names down. Tell the class you have picked two secret workers. If the two Secret Workers are quiet, follow directions, and stay on task they will earn an award for the entire class. If they don't, they will not receive the reward. Since no one knows who the workers are, everyone tends to work quite well. They can earn free time or an extra 5 or 10 min. of recess, etc. This type of reward seems like a more

logical choice since they were so focused in their work.

Lisa

One {idea} is having the students consistently line up in alphabetical order by their first names. The one at head of the line is the leader for the day (special helper, brings a show and tell, does the calendar routine, etc.) Next day that student goes to the end of the line and we have a new leader. This way everyone has a turn, they know their spot and it saves any arguments over who is where in line. This also helps teach the concept of alphabetical order of course, and means only one show and tell a day so it is not a big amount of time out of the day.



I write the student's login and password for our computer network on the back of their rulers. This identifies their ruler and they just carry it to the computer and lay it along the top of the keyboard (fits well) when needed.

Kids just love using individual chalkboards or whiteboards. These are great for group phonics lessons as you can see at a glance as they are writing who is "getting" it and who isn't. I have them hug the board to their chest (not closely or they'll have marker or chalk on their clothes) when done writing to help prevent copying. We choose someone to come up and share theirs and the rest check their answer.

To ensure equal turns - write each student's name on a popsicle stick and put in a container (labelled "Needs a Turn") names down. Have a second container (labelled "Had a Turn") to put ones in as drawn. When needing a "volunteer" draw a stick, then put in the second container. Once everyone has had a turn, move all sticks back to the "Needs a Turn" container.

I buy inexpensive wider headbands at the dollar store (3 or 4 for a \$1) and write each child's name on one. When they need assistance they put on the headband to indicate the need instead of raising their hand. This way they can still keep working while waiting for help, and with any luck will have solved it themselves before I get to them.

I make a big map of the desks on 1/2 sheet of bristol board, laminate it and post in my room near my desk. Each student's name is written on a Post-It note (1" X 1 1/2") and put on the chart as a seating plan. It is very easy to move these around as the seating plan changes (which I tend to do a lot) so it is always up-to-date for supply teachers. {It is} also great to visualize a new arrangement before actually moving the students so you can quickly identify any possible problem areas.

Nancy

1. Each student has a "Busy Bag" at their desk (a ziplock will do). Inside are mini-booklets to colour and read, crayons, little word cards (sight words, theme words) for students to put into their own sentences, dice and a mini pad of paper to practice equations - basically the teacher could put items inside so that fast finishers don't get up and ask "What do I do now?" - they'll always have a little bag of activities at their desk.

2. Beginning in about January, I like to send home a duotang with photocopies of Journal entries of all the children in the class; each student takes it home for one evening (theoretically) and reads it with their parents - it gives the student reading practice and lets parents see how their child is writing in relation to others in the classroom. I put an explanatory note at the front of the duotang and a "comments" sheet at the back - I've always had very positive feedback and haven't yet had anyone lose the duotang!

3. Two wonderful books that my dear friend and job-share partner told me about: both by Frank Reynolds, one is called "The Dot" and the other is "Ish" - both are marvelous books to share near the beginning of the school year to promote art in the classroom - they are both very inspiring and empowering books for those little ones who may feel intimidated by art. My partner has been fabulous in providing true "art" opportunities for our Grade Ones (as opposed to "crafts") - this year, our students learned about and imitated paintings and art in the styles of Vincent Van Gogh, Edgar Degas, Georgia O'Keefe and Claude Monet - and they LOVED it and all think of themselves as "artists" - just wonderful!

Lesley

Here are two ideas I've used year after year. The new Primary classes coming in have often seen these items on display the previous year and look forward to making their own version!

1) In the fall, I cut leaf shapes out of plain white tag or bristol board. Using the little pencil sharpeners, the children create various colour crayon shavings and spread them over their leaf. An adult then places a sheet of aluminum foil over the leaf and irons it with a warm iron. The colours blend together and no two leaves look the same!

2) In the spring, we take round paper coffee filters and colour them with Crayola markers. When they are coloured to the student's liking, they spray them with water from a mini spray bottle. These dry overnight. The student also colours a wooden spring clothes pin. They then clip the clothespin into the center of the dry filter and with the addition of a pair of "googly" eyes, and a hanging string, create a butterfly. These are displayed in the classroom on a large tree branch which has been sprayed white and has a string of white Christmas lights on it.

Both of these items are perennial favourites for the School Art Show held for three days in May.

Shelagh

I have a favourite game that my classes have thoroughly enjoyed for the past couple of years. I originally saw it in a colleague's class (she has used it for a number of years, also). I had been using my own roughly made version, but noticed it has been taken on and a very professional looking game is being sold by a group of Australian teachers. There should not be any copyright issues as the game is not theirs, they are merely selling a ready made version as a time saver for busy teachers. The game is intended for Grade One students. I created my own version for Kindergarten.

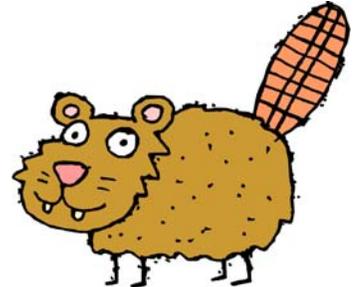
Grade One

- print twenty sight words on cardstock*
- make three or four additional cards of the same size with the word BANG printed on them
- place the pile of cards face down between two students
- each child takes a turn, turning over a card and reading the sight word
- if the word is correctly read, the child keeps the card
- if the child can not read the card, play passes to the other player
- if the BANG card is turned over, that player takes the other players entire stack of cards
- the game ends when all the cards have been turned over and read

*multiple levels of sight words may be used, but each level should be printed on different coloured tag or paper, to ease sorting and clean up.

Kindergarten

- print letters of the alphabet on cardstock (use separate colours for upper and lower case)
- make five or six additional cards of the same size with the word BANG printed on them
- play as above*



*For the easiest level of play, the students must name the letter.

For the next level of play, they must name the letter and letter sound.

For the highest level of play, they must name the letter, the letter sound, and a word that starts with the letter.

Vicki

1. We put numbers on personal pencils, erasers, glue sticks and felt markers. I make a class list as soon as my class is confirmed and each child gets a number. This saves so much time - especially those roly-poly glue stick lids! I saw your number spaces on the math worksheets I think! That gave me the idea of putting them on the edge of the field trip forms - so much easier to track.

2. I buy the large name tags for their desks. It has a number line with red and blue dots for odd/even, shapes with names, coloured crayons with colour words, a space large enough for both names and their number, of course, and a picture alphabet. You have to cut off the ruler - it measures inches. I use mactac to tape it down on their desk and use a piece large enough to cover the whole top part of their desk. This gives me space on each side of the name tag where I can tape special lists - words of the week, number words etc. - but the tape goes on the mactac - not on the desk where it gets so hard to remove in July. Sorry - can't remember the name of the company but it is easy to find. This is used in many lessons all year!

3. I have tried NOT to laminate any more - remember how long it is in the landfill if you toss it. Also - displayed items just give off glare.

4. Separate binders for: letters and notices sent home; field trip forms and letters. This saved so much looking around when I needed an extra copy - and - made for shortcuts in the next year.

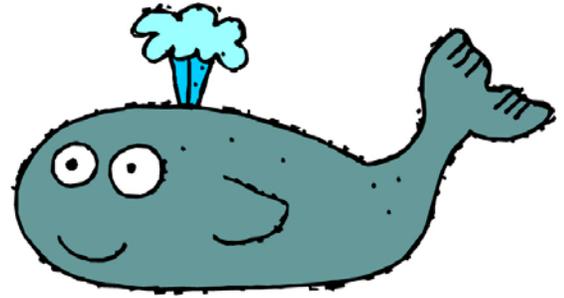
5. I started using small cardboard rectangles that fit in my calendar instead of commercial ones. I numbered them and the class would decorate them. They could have their own number, a special day - birthday etc, and more of course. They decorated according to the season or occasion. It made the calendar look very special. We liked it so much we kept all the cards facing out. This meant everyone had to pay attention when counting and stop on the right day.

6. I kept a special basket beside my chair for books I wanted to read to them. I never had time to read them all but I noticed the children would dig in the basket and read them or just look at them themselves.

7. Favourite books: *One Grey Mouse* by Burton - Canadian too! Teaches colours, numbers and predicting - I tell the children there is a secret - they all know what number will come next - but can they figure out the colour? Another favourite became the basis for studying sea otters: *Sea Otter Inlet* by Celia Godkin - she studied art at university but wanted to draw scientific pictures - her illustrations make the book - all accurate! It covers environmental and life cycle outcomes. You can get great material from the Monterey website and maybe from the Vancouver Aquarium. Over the years I had collected stuffies, sea urchin and other shells and videos. In Grade 1 it became a real research unit with a picture chart and art work (plasticine and painting) puppets and poems. Godkin has 2 other books in her environmental series - *Wolf Island* and *Ladybug Garden* - very apt for today's outcomes.



8. I kept the white sticky labels (from the office) handy. I needed them to correct errors I made on charts etc. I made sure I made mistakes in front of the children. Oops! I need a paper bandaid. They needed them sometimes for art or other things and they saw that a mistake is just something to be fixed. How do you fix this? What do you need?



9. Plasticine is wonderful - once they learn to soften it and not take too big a chunk. It makes them look at things differently from flat 2-d drawings. I bought placemats from dollar stores (wonderful places for math manipulatives too), cut them in half and kept them in a tub with the plasticine, small paper plates for displays. But, one custodian said not to keep plasticine if it has been worked - toss it out in June - just keep the fresh stuff. Apparently it can harbour bacteria. I really don't know if it is true or not but it made sense.

10. We started out each day with a silly song - Good Morning to the sun - and a little tap dance at the end. It just made us all laugh! As the days went on, we would change the words to fit the season, weather or something special they wanted to say good morning to; whatever - the laugh and music were important; don't forget to laugh and have a good time. All the best to all the hard-working teachers!

Jill

You said that you would like to know more about 10 frames. This is a simple thing I do during my calendar time to keep track of the school days and to help students develop a better sense of numbers (especially bigger numbers). You must be willing to use a rather large wall space during the school year. I put a ten frame up near the calendar and each day the calendar helper uses a bingo dabber to dot each day (they love this). As a 10 frame fills up I add another one so that students can see the frames spill-over with dots. As the year went on I could see students were really beginning to understand the concept of tens and ones. I find that students are confused when we bundle sticks and put them in a container.

Charts, charts, and more charts! I always struggle with what to do with all of the charts we create. I buy good, strong adhesive hooks and stick them on the ceiling (my last classroom had beams so this was easy). I stick up lots of hooks all over and I do this at the beginning of the year. If the hooks are good quality then I only climb the ladder once. I then hang my charts on metal or plastic coat hangers with pegs. I don't need to climb on anything to hang these as I use a metre stick to reach when hanging and taking down charts. This works really well and it is a quick way to hang charts throughout the year. The students refer to them all the time (especially the language charts).

Sue

My teaching tip is a quick and easy way to partner up kids in the classroom. In September I make a Buddy Up wheel. It is made up of 2 circles, one smaller than the other. I attach them in the middle with a brad fastener with the smaller circle on top. The circles are each divided into twelve sections but if you have a smaller class than 24 each wheel can have less sections. I divide my kids into two groups putting their names either on the inside or outside circle. Each day the inside circle moves one space to the right. If we have an activity that needs a buddy they have one. No arguing or hard feelings if they don't get picked first by a friend. When I have an uneven number of children I leave one section blank. The child that gets the blank section has me for a partner! I try to set up the buddy wheel so that any children that should not be buddied together are on the same wheel so that they never have a chance to buddy up. I have been doing this for years and once the wheel is set up and in place it is a really big time saver.

Sandy

One of my favourite classroom management games is the "quiet game". When we're getting ready to walk in the halls I tell all the students that we're going to play the hallway game. It works like this. When the students walk in the hall they need to be quiet, if someone speaks I get a point, if I speak to someone in the halls (another teacher etc.) they get a point. Whoever ends up with the most points wins. I always "accidentally" say hello to someone then pretend to forget that we're playing the hallway game (so I lose a point). The only condition is that we can all speak if there is an emergency or unsafe situation. Students from grade 1 all the way to 8 love this game. Many of the teachers in my school are now playing the hallway game. It's no wonder that so many people compliment me on just how quiet my students are when they walk in the halls!!!

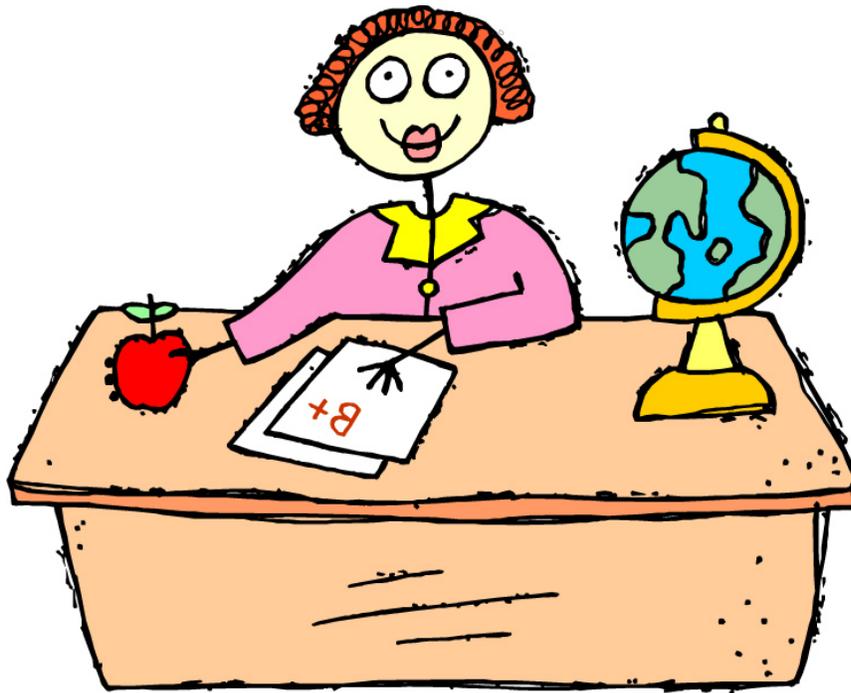
Theresa



Buzz: This game is used to practice counting (by ones, skip counting, forwards or backwards). Everyone stands in a circle. If we're counting by tens then the "person of the day" begins by saying "10". The person next to him says "20" and so on until the 10th person says "100". The NEXT person says "Buzz" and the NEXT person sits down. The game continues until finally one person is left standing as the winner. The children sitting down aren't calling out numbers, but the game goes quickly enough that they don't mind being left out for a bit. Plus, lots of them count along with the other kids or try and figure out who's going to be buzzed next. This game is VERY popular, year after year, and the students are always asking me if we can play it!

Morning Meeting: First thing every morning we meet on the carpet and begin our day with a handshake and hello. We stand in a circle. I turn to the person next to me, shake their hand and say, "Good morning, Susan!". Then Susan says to me, "Good morning, Mrs. Leyne." Susan turns to the person on her right, shakes hands and says good morning. The handshake travels all the way around the circle. It's a lovely, calm way to start the day, everyone is recognized, and the children learn to shake hands properly, look their friend in the eye, and greet them with a smile on their face.

Barb



Thank you to everyone who kindly shared these great ideas! Keep them coming!

Jean