

idea swap

The best ideas come from teachers like you!



MINI-MUMMIES

«My students make model Egyptian mummies out of clay and self-stick gauze.

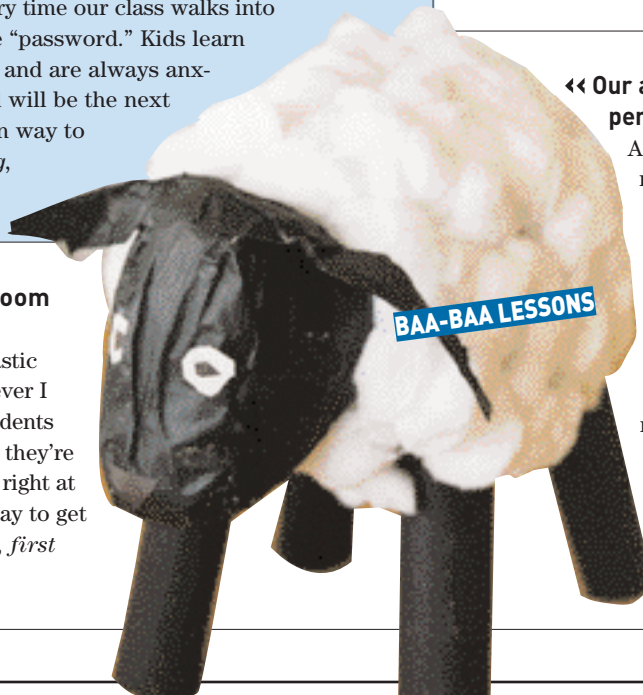
It affords them the opportunity to become the embalmer and the craftsman: From wrapping the mummy, drawing the hieroglyphics, drafting miniature jewelry, it's a hands-on trip through time. I require that the kids use real ancient Egyptian designs and themes learned throughout the unit. —Kathleen Havens, Houston Museum of Natural Science, Houston, TX

No one can enter our classroom without saying the "secret password."

Each day I put a high-frequency word in the window. Every time our class walks into the room, each child has to say the "password." Kids learn to recognize and read those words and are always anxious to find out what the password will be the next day! I've found it's a unique and fun way to review vocabulary. —Wendy Chang, first grade, El Sobrante, CA

I've discovered the best classroom management tool: popcorn!

I fill paper plates, glass jars, and plastic bowls with popcorn kernels. Whenever I shake one of the containers, the students "stop and pop": They stop whatever they're doing, pop their heads up, and look right at me. They love it, and it's a unique way to get students' attention. —Erika LaPort, first grade, Lockport, NY



BAA-BAA LESSONS

«Our animal sculptures are the perfect ending to our farm unit.

As a class we brainstorm what materials would be best suited for each animal based on how they look and feel. The project enables students to gain problem-solving skills, demonstrate the animal anatomy lessons they've learned, and strengthen their relationships with their classmates (they work in groups of three) while being creative and having a great time!

—Kimberly Shapiro, first grade, Greenville, NY



PLAYING WITH SHAPES

^ Our first graders and preschoolers had a blast working together to learn about shapes. The older kids helped the younger ones identify basic shapes, use activity cards to replicate drawings, read shape books, make three-dimensional shapes with straws and pipe cleaners, and glue shapes to make artwork. Now we want to plan more hands-on explorations across the grade levels.

—Stacey Conroy, preschool, Harker-Wylie Elementary School, Browns Mills, NJ

idea swap



⤴ **Make your own “hungry caterpillars” during your study of life cycles.** Start by reading *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. Then ask kids to draw a leaf on a sheet of card stock. Have them tear tissue paper into small pieces and apply the pieces to the leaf with glue and water. Use pompoms to make the caterpillar’s body and card stock to make wings. Toilet paper tubes covered in glue and string form the chrysalis. Simply roll the butterfly up and slip it into its cocoon. —*Wilma Arbaugh, Woodbury, TN*



⤴ **Our fourth-grade class learned about their state, its symbol, and its history!** We chose the sego lily, our state flower, as the subject of our piece. The students first did their own smaller lily, then moved on to work collaboratively on this large canvas, using tissue paper and watered down white glue. —*Karen Kelley, fourth grade, Layton, UT*

Bulletin Board BONANZA!

Patti Hertzog, teacher at the Mountain Mission School in Grundy, Virginia, shares her best bulletin board ideas.



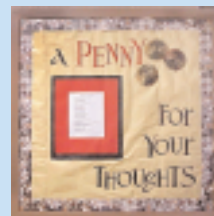
VACATION MEMORIES: “Our choir played an extended game of Survivor. When they returned from a tour, we posted their team flags, along with photos of places they’d visited.”



WORDS OF WISDOM: Have students find and illustrate an uplifting quote from literature or history. Your resulting “Inspiration Wall” will offer a visual pep talk all year long.



PROOFREADING POWER: Deputize students to investigate and nab grammar goofs in print. Paste offending passages (from newspapers, fliers, and magazines) for all to see.



THINK ABOUT IT: Ideas, complaints, daydreams? Here’s the perfect spot for classroom sharing. As a treat, you can read aloud from a week’s worth of thoughts on Friday.

Pretend you're at the beach while you grade papers.

Put a tray of sand underneath your desk. When you're doing paperwork at the end of the day, slip off your shoes and run your toes through the sand. It's so relaxing, and it really takes away the stress of the day.

—Cindy Zalkin, retiree, Charleston, SC

I teach my first graders to write me letters about everything—

whether they need to inform me about an incident, ask me a question, or explain why they didn't bring in homework. This rule accomplishes several goals, including practice writing about and analyzing specific situations. Kids also get the feeling that they can always come to me with help on "important" issues that they cannot solve on their own. —Orquidea Wilcox, first grade, Riverside, CA

We're always "on TV" in our

classroom. At the beginning of the year the kids and I made a television out of a cardboard box. We cut a hole in it (the screen), then covered the TV body with paper and stickers. Now students love to give book reports, do "advertisements," and give oral reports, because they get to be "on TV!" Actually, they are just behind the TV, but their classmates see their head framed in the screen. The students love it and I'm planning on using it next year, too. —Jeannie Harries, first grade, Perry, KS

So my kids don't have to keep their hands in the air, we use

question cups. I used a hot-glue gun to connect two sturdy, plastic cups together. Using a permanent marker, I drew question marks on one of the two cups. At the beginning of group work time, each group puts their cup blank-side up. When a group has a question, they turn the question-side up as a signal to me that they need help. This gives me a silent, visual clue to help them as soon as I can, plus they can continue to work on other parts of the project while they wait. —Vaishali Chinn, third grade, Winston-Salem, NC

Now my students always turn their work in on time.

After struggling for years with excuses, I decided to eliminate any particular day as the due date and to instead make due dates an *entire week*, with presentations on Friday.

Now I write on the board, "Project due week of..." This has not only eliminated forgetfulness and absenteeism, but also

lack of motivation! Students see others bringing in their projects and very often sneak theirs out to re-do them, because of the competition as the days go by. This has been such a wonderful solution to my problem that I only wonder why it took me so long to think of it!

—Susan R. Ferguson, sixth grade, Leominster, MA



Island Right



Roaring Twenties,
Maria Mast, Quincy, IL



Milk Jug Animals, Karen
Skophammer, Ft. Dodge, IA



Dragon Puppets,
Jackie Howes, Weatogue, CT

Have a great teaching idea?

Share it with your friends!

P.S.: Send a photo!

It's easy! Here's how:

1 E-MAIL US: Send your quick teaching ideas and photographs to instructor@scholastic.com at any time (why not right after your top-notch lesson?). Remember that large, bright, and clear photos work best.

2 SEND A FAX: If it's easier for you to fax, go ahead and do so to 212-343-4799. Don't forget to include all of your contact information!

3 SNAIL MAIL WORKS, TOO: In fact, if you have a sample of a cool project you're willing to part with, we'd love to see it! Send crafts, photos, and more ideas to Idea Swap Editor, *Instructor*, P.O. Box 713, New York, New York 10013-713. Keep 'em coming!

I wear cheap cotton gloves so I can erase my white board quickly and easily. They protect my hands from staining and to erase, it's merely a "wipe of the hands." Students have given me different pairs of gloves and created a color code for the activity depending on which gloves I use. —*T. Haste, eighth grade, Albuquerque, NM*

My kids give me a report card. At the end of each semester I provide them with an anonymous feedback form full of questions related to my teaching and classroom environment. I always include space for comments, and ask students to use a scale of 1 to 10 to tell me what they think. I view the forms as an opportunity to make needed changes and to continue to provide my students with quality education. —*LaTisha Gholston, special ed, St. Louis, MO*

The theme of my kindergarten class is "responsibility." To kick-off the theme, I invite parents and incoming students to my room before the school year begins. We go on a tour and, as a group, come up with class rules for the year, which I record on a poster. We also discuss consequences for not following the rules. This evening gives kids and parents a sense of ownership, which has helped to build a positive school climate. —*Velma Parsons, kindergarten, Novinger, MO*

Class parties are a breeze when you plan them in 15 minutes. I write down the parties we will have for the year on slips of paper. Next I let the students draw from a cup, and I list their names on a sheet under the parties they drew. I send a completed list home to all parents to let them know when they are to furnish snacks. Parents sign the form letting me know if they agree to participate. I have had great success with this idea and it takes the pressure off of me. Parents love it! —*Debra Matthews, third grade, Gordo, AL*

Want to get to know your students in a flash? I use a questionnaire for students to fill out on the first day we

are together. Questions include “three things about the best teacher I ever had,” and “three things I want to know about.” I read every student’s paper and type a reply to each child, responding to one of their questions or commenting on something we have in common. I place the responses on the students’ desks so everyone has a note to read. It’s a great way to welcome and get to know a big group of kids. —*Colleen Thrailkill, fourth grade, Cornelius, NC*

Buy inexpensive “tap on” lights to make an instant trivia game.

I have two of them from the dollar store and use them for spelling. I divide the class into two teams, have the first player from each team step up to the lights, and say a spelling word. The first person to tap the light and spell the word correctly receives a point. We end by all enjoying a roll of Smarties candy—because we’re all such smart spellers! —*Marla Crawford, second grade, Grand Island, NY*



PATRIOTIC PARTY

⚡ In honor of our troops serving in Iraq, our class learned patriotic songs and made colorful hats.

We also made yummy flags using graham crackers, frosting, licorice, and candies (one child remarked, “freedom tastes delicious!”). Then we had a group singing session. As you can see, the kids had a blast! —*Courtney McDonald, kindergarten, Utica, KY*

We learn about telling time through reading *Grandpa’s Eyes*, by Patricia MacLachlan. The story is about a little boy who learns to see the world through the “eyes” of his blind grandfather. The grandmother serves

meals in a clock pattern for the grandfather so he knows how his food is arranged on the plate. I give each student a plain white paper plate, construction paper, crayons, scissors, and glue. I ask them to draw and cut out some of their favorite foods, which they then glue onto their paper plates. Next they write out the clock directions for the food,

according to their plates. For instance, “The piece of pizza is at six o’clock and the brownie is at nine o’clock.” Finally, students partner up and read their directions to their partner, who closes his or her eyes and points to where the food should be and then looks to see if they are correct. —*Brenda Wilke, third grade, via e-mail* □

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