

Steal these ideas! Winning activities



Will the Real Abe Lincoln Please Stand Up?

We made Lincoln costumes to celebrate the end of our President study. They're easy: The kids traced a hat shape onto black construction paper and cut it out. Then we stapled a long curve to either side for the beard and a strip across the back to hold it on. —Jennifer Kopp, Tenafly, NJ

In the winter, my students “chill out” with a seasonal grammar activity. After creating frosty scenes from torn-paper collage, I have students label each thing in their artwork. Here's the twist: Each label must be color-coded according to its part of speech. For example, nouns (such as *snowman* and *scarf*) are written in red; verbs (such as *sled* and *skate*) are written in green; and so on. It's fun, and the kids really get a grasp on grammar! —Audrey Kennan, third grade, Plainsboro, NJ

Our classroom store doesn't take up a lot of space—it fits right on a bulletin board. I collect small, inexpensive items such as stickers and dime-store toys. I place each item in a self-sealing bag, label it with a price, and attach the bags to a bulletin board. I give kids play money when they are on task. The store is only “open” for a half hour on Fridays, but my kids have all week to check out what they want to buy and figure out how much money they'll have left. This means they're doing math prob-

lems all week long! —Vivien Maria McLachlan, first grade, Chelmsford, MA

We learn about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. straight from the source. I find that nothing reaches my fifth and sixth graders quite so powerfully as listening to the “I Have a Dream” speech for themselves. To honor Dr. King's birthday, we watch the video online (it's at www.scholastic.com/instructor, “January/February Links”). After hearing King's speech, students write about their own dreams. We hang their speeches in the hallway for the whole school to read and be inspired by. —Dana Smith, fifth and sixth grade, Haynesville, LA

We host an architectural challenge on the 100th day of school. Each year, I divide my kindergarten class into small groups, giving each 100 small plastic cups. The challenge? To build a castle that uses all 100—and doesn't fall down! Physical science is incorporated into the activity, as students do not use glue or tape; they simply layer the cups to make

the structures stand by themselves. When the buildings are complete, each group is given an award (longest, tallest, most unusual shape, and so on). We take photos and then disassemble the towers, saving the cups to use again next year! —Christine Waddell, kindergarten, Abbott, TX

My school's staff really looks forward to February 14. Rather than sending valentines to one another, the students in my class send notes of appreciation to our principal, administrative assistant, receptionist, librarian, custodian, and specialty teachers. Pairs of children write (or draw) what they love about the staff member on a sheet of white paper, then paste the sheet onto a large red heart and decorate it. On the big day, I let children deliver their valentines personally. It's a fabulous way to encourage children to reach out, and the staff just loves it! —Christy Friesen, kindergarten, Tulsa, OK

✂ **Our second semester kicks off with a festive New Year's party.** Parents bring in finger foods, hats, and noisemakers. The students dress up like they're going to a real New Year's celebration. We play music and count down to the new year, and the whole grade gets together to toast—with sparkling cider, of course! —Jennifer Kopp, second grade, Tenafly, NJ



from real teachers

We make history personal on President's Day. I have each student choose an adult to interview, such as a teacher, parent, grandparent, or neighbor. The children create lists of Presidents that served during the adults' lifetimes, and ask the interviewees to share an interesting or important memory of each one. Back in class, students share their new presidential knowledge with peers and compare the different memories. It's a great way to make the past come alive! —*Lynne Gorcowski, fifth grade, Park Forest, IL*

I found an inexpensive incentive to keep students on track. It was always a struggle to get report cards, permission slips, and signed homework back to the classroom—until I bought a

roll of raffle tickets. Now, each time students bring back an item on the assigned day, they sign a ticket and put it in the raffle bowl. Each Friday, we draw four names for prizes. I give out cool pens and folders, or coupons for extra computer time. The more often kids enter, the better their chances to win.

—*Shannon Cornelius, seventh and eighth grade, Woodbury, TN*

Whenever I have a meeting with parents, I set out stationery and stickers. While parents are waiting, I have them write a “love ya” letter to their child. After our meeting, parents leave the letter in their child's desk—and you should see the smiles the next morning! —*Ruth Lyons, third and fourth grade, Skowhegan, ME*



Broken Heart Math

To create these fun puzzles, I cut paper hearts down the middle. On one half, I write a math problem. Then on the other half, I write the answer. I place the broken pieces in an envelope and challenge kids to put the valentines back together.

—*Marjorie Sanchez, New York, NY*

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