

Classroom organisation

1 Gathering the tools

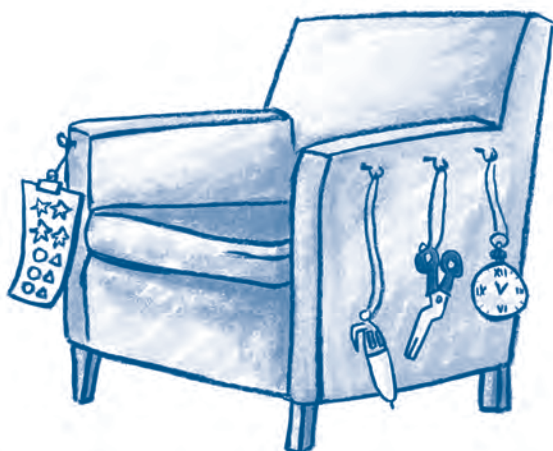
Before the students come anywhere near the classroom door, some basic preparation will help things run smoothly from the start. You will need to arm yourself with a supply of the following:

- ☼ small adhesive hooks (such as cup hooks)
- ☼ adhesive Velcro strips or dots
- ☼ magnetic strips (you can cut up advertising fridge magnets for a cheap option)
- ☼ soft nylon cord.

You'll also need access to a laminator, a glue gun and probably a hammer and nails.

2 The teacher's chair

We have an old comfy armchair at the front of the class where we mark the roll, read stories and from where we administrate. The armchair sets a lovely tone. Being at the opposite end of the room to our teacher's desk, the roll and frequently used stationery items are best kept on hand here at all times. Enter the bank-style, chained pen concept. On the side of the armchair, or attached to a surface within hand's reach, stick several cup hooks. Tie a pen (preferably a changeable colour pen with red and blue) to one hook with soft nylon cord. Scissors, another often used item, are tied to another hook. We have a stopwatch hanging on a hook there as well, ready for our Friday morning 'time the roll' routine (see 'The roll', page 30). A sheet of stickers, hanging on the hook with a small bulldog clip, completes the essentials.



3 By the door

Attach more cup hooks near the door for the following: bank bag, lunch-order bag and spare notices. Hooks for a yard duty bumbag, shovel and brush, a 'bags bag' and emergency evacuation procedures also belong here. Don't forget to label each hook clearly. Monitors can then, for example, get the bank bag and call for bank books on bank-book day independently of you fishing out the bank-book bag from somewhere in your desk.

Cup hooks are also handy for storing blank 'Look-say-cover-write-check' and 'Have a go' sheets where students can access them independently when needed. Simply hang the sheets on the hook with a bulldog clip in an accessible place.



4 Two-dollar shop light laundry hanger

A fantastic investment of two dollars! When hung above the teacher's desk, this pegged plastic hanger is an excellent place to store returned notices, permission slips for upcoming excursions, spelling lists for the week, etc.



5 Sets of class name magnets

Type a chart listing the first names of all the students in the class. Print five or more of these charts on brightly coloured papers, laminate them and slice the names into individual cards.

Use a glue gun to glue some squares of chopped fridge magnets on the reverse side of two or more sets of the cards. Keep one set of magnetic name cards on the whiteboard to rotate students through partners (for example, for partner reading) or to keep track of students who are yet to complete a task (such as to give an oral presentation, or read their story to the class). Another set of magnetic name cards can be used for teacher-selected groups (for example, reading groups, cooperative learning groups). Using these cards is efficient and flexible – making changes to organised groups is easy, such as swapping Emir who didn't cook with that group because he was at keyboard.

Apply adhesive Velcro strips to the reverse side of another set of the name cards. The Velcro name cards have strong sticking power and are effective to rotate students through your monitor system over the year and also for use in a class ladder (see, for example, 'Tables challenge ladder', page 7).

Leave a set plain as well and store them in a handy place. These are great for random selections – for drawing names out of the hat – and for efficiently sorting the class into teacher-selected groups (simply switch the cards around until you are happy with the balance of each group).

Term 2 Groups			Tuesday 30th March		
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	What's on today?		
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	
Family Talks			V.I.P.S.		
<input type="text" value="Trish"/>			<input type="text" value="Tyler"/>		
<input type="text" value="John"/>			<input type="text" value="Jess"/>		
<input type="text" value="Sue"/>					

6 Essential charts and posters

Several charts in particular contribute to the smooth running of the classroom.

- ☀ A 'Welcome to Grade ...' sign for the door. Also a door chart with the name of the teacher and all of the students in the grade.



- ☀ Another handy sign to have for the door is 'Sorry you missed us. You'll find us at ... (computer lab, library, art room, in the hall, etc.)'. If this chart is laminated, students can tick the appropriate box when the class leaves the room. A whiteboard marker Velcroed near the door makes this a simple task and parents will love you for it!



- ☀ **A class calendar**, preferably large and hung in a prominent position, is a must for building anticipation for (and keeping track of) upcoming events. It really helps team morale and participation.
- ☀ **Star charts** really do motivate students to achieve the next step. Hang stickers nearby (with a bulldog clip and cup hook again) to enable students to put on their own stickers.

READ – IT – DIARY									
	25	50	75	100	125	150	175	200	Year's Total
Joshua	★	★							
Melinda									
Callum	★								
Brandon									
Emily	★	★							
Sebastian	★								
Chloe	★	★	★						
Tamara	★								
Jenny									
Scott	★	★							

NUMBER FACTS									
	2		3		4		5		
	+	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	
Joshua	★	★	★						
Melinda	★	★	★						
Callum	★	★							
Brandon	★								
Emily	★	★	★	★					
Sebastian	★	★	★						

TIMES TABLES									
	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
Joshua	★	★		★					★
Melinda	★	★	★	★					★
Callum	★	★	★	★			★		
Brandon	★			★	★				
Emily	★	★		★					
Sebastian	★			★					

7 Nets, upside-down umbrella frames and nylon string

Students (and parents) love seeing their work displayed but there is so little hanging space in the classroom. Good-quality nylon string is easy to tension. Staple pieces of work together and hang them. (Don't use pegs – they make the string sag.)

The humble coat-hanger is also a perfect display vehicle.

Daily routines

1 The roll

As mentioned, the roll is best kept within hands' reach of where you mark it (sounds obvious, we know!). The roll call can be made more interesting by having students answer a question each morning, for example, *What is your favourite fruit/most hated vegetable/thing you're looking forward to today?* Questions can relate to a relevant classroom topic or be pure enjoyment. (Students' suggestions can be lots of fun indeed!)

If you're a relieving teacher, spend a little more time on this to get to know the students' names, and ask them to tell you something special about themselves.

Another variation is timing the roll call. We like to do this once a week – on Fridays to welcome in the end of the week. Students have to say their first and last names in correct roll order (without prompting from the teacher), attempting to beat their previous record. We had one class do it in 8.7 seconds! If the class beat their own record a small reward is given. (This actually doesn't happen too often as the time quickly gets hard to beat!)

2 The notices folder

Oh, the endless paper trail home! We find it invaluable for students to each have a sealable plastic folder for getting notices home and back to school again. This folder lives in the schoolbag and comes to school every day. All notices and

correspondence are placed in this folder before going home. All notices and permission slips are returned in the folder, which is brought out of the bag every morning.

If this is a new system for your students, be sure to reward those who remember it (perhaps with house points) until it is as established as bringing their lunch box.

3 Agenda

Students enjoy having a daily agenda listed on the board. In the lower and middle grades it might be called 'What's on today?'. It is usually the first thing students want to see when they come inside in the morning. We read through our agenda after our roll call so we all know what's coming, and then tick off the boxes during the day as we have done each item.

A variation is to list on the board the goals for the day – goals for the students and goals for the teacher.

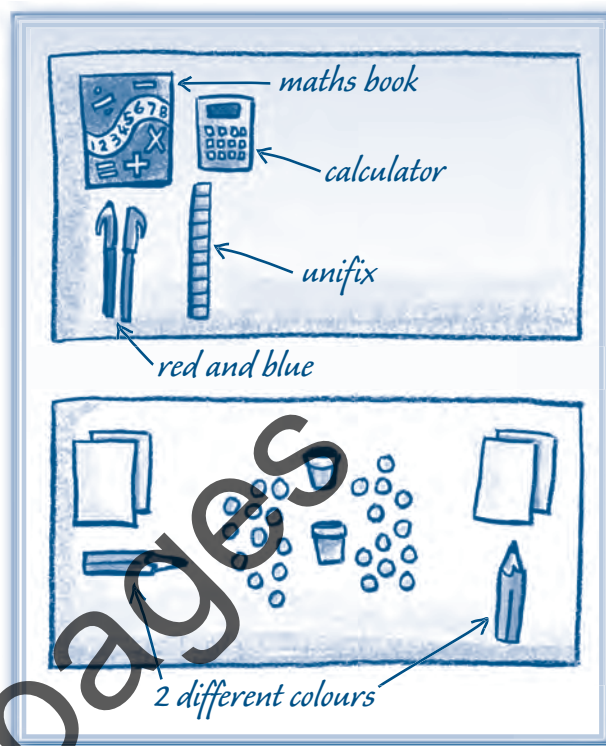
Tuesday 30th March
What's on today?

- Roll, calendar*
- Reading groups*
- Writing – poems – Feather or fur*
- Maths – Making rulers*
- SPORT*
- Story – My place*
- Mapping – Australia*

4 Visual organisation

Instead of giving numerous verbal instructions to organise students for a lesson, give a visual instruction for them to follow independently.

Simply show a table-top (bird's-eye view) on the whiteboard, then indicate via symbols and/or labels what is required and where it should be placed.



Students quickly learn to keep an eye out for this section of the board and enjoy 'setting themselves up' before sitting down to start a lesson.

Students and teachers benefit from this system. There is less teacher talk, students thrive on the responsibility, and the flow of a lesson is not interrupted midway through by organisational issues.

5 Classroom chairperson

We have found that appointing a student chairperson for a day is a wonderful means of developing shared ownership in the smooth functioning of the classroom. Of course, this procedure must be introduced judiciously. (We don't recommend it for a first-day relief teacher in that notorious grade 5!)

The success of the chairperson is dependent upon the modelling and expectations of the teacher and requires carefully laid plans for its implementation.

The chairperson is responsible for one day for the way the students work in the grade and for its routine functioning. This student lets the class know:

- ☀ when they can go out for recess or lunch
- ☀ when they have their brain food
- ☀ the acceptable noise level in the classroom.

Their final task for the day is to oversee the tidy-up before home time. They check tables, floor, etc. and then they signal when students can go.

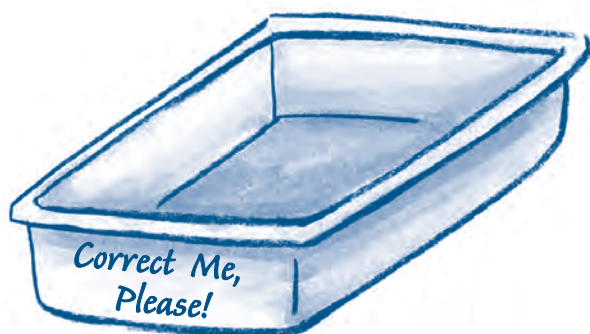
It sounds like a lot of responsibility, but the chosen chairperson loves it. As well, they can see what it's like to be in charge of creating a classroom atmosphere just the way they would like it.

An additional organising role for the students is the Classroom Secretary. They work under the chairperson and can do those chores such as take up the roll, collect and deliver canteen orders, run messages, hand out worksheets and materials, tick the sign on the door when the class leaves the room and check lights are turned off.

6 'Correct me, please' container

This is such a simple idea, but it saves so much hassle. The students know the routine. When they have completed their work they put it in the 'Correct Me, Please' container and then move to one of the three or four work corners around the room – the literacy corner, the maths corner, the computer corner.

This counteracts the supremely irritating 'I've finished! What'll I do now?' mantra which is the bane of the teacher's life, especially when she/he is trying to help another group or is preoccupied with one-to-one teaching.



7 Music, music, music

The relief teacher who arrives at the school with a guitar is never forgotten. Moreover, the class teacher who uses music every day is invariably loved.

There are many reasons for daily music, not the least because it soothes the soul and elevates the spirit.

Music while the students work is a marvellous means of subtly educating them in the variety of forms. (It's called immersion!) As well, it can be used for practical purposes, such as during pack-up time. Explain, 'I'm going to play the music and by the time it's finished, everything must be packed – tables tidy, chairs parked, floors pristine.'

Please don't just use music as the final routine for the day. It is the lost art in primary schools. Where is all the singing? Where are the choirs? Where are the joyful chants? (Even tables sound jaunty when they are sung.)

We know that not all teachers can sing, but today there are so many electronic aids to help you. It would be so good to hear again the sound that was once distinctive in primary schools – students' singing lifting the rafters or echoing down the corridors.

Weekly routines

1 Homework

We're not huge advocates of copious amounts of homework. Kids should be busy being kids out of school. Reading daily should, however, be enforced with a severe penalty for non-compliance!

Having said that, many schools and many parents have specific homework expectations. If giving homework, then you must follow up by:

- ☀ correcting work and returning it
- ☀ following up students who don't complete it (such as having them complete it at lunch time or when the rest of the class has free time).

It's amazing what a little incentive will do. House points may be given to students who do complete and hand in homework, for example:

- ☀ 100 house points for a filled-up Take-Home Reading Record for lower primary
- ☀ 100 house points for each home spelling practice (as evidenced by a parental signature) for the middle school

- ☀ 500 house points for a maths sheet returned on time for the upper school.

Avoid traditional homework drudge. Here is a sample sheet of an alternative homework program. In this sample, compulsory homework is combined with a child's choice. As well, you will win life-long acclamation from the parents if you always include the housework section!

Year 4 HOMEWORK GRID

Date given: Monday 1st September

Name: _____

Date Due: Friday 5th September

<p>READ</p> <p>A variety is good. Choose from take-home books, magazines, novels, poetry, information reports.</p> <p>Record your reading daily in your Reading Diary.</p>	<p>BE READ TO</p> <p>By another member of the family.</p>	<p>PLAY A MATHS GAME</p> <p>As a part of Literacy and Numeracy Week, invite an adult to play a board game with you, e.g. Monopoly or any other game that involves chance or maths.</p>
<p>COMPUTER</p> <p>Use the computer to log on to an online maths website where you can practise your maths skills and possibly compete against others in maths questions.</p>	<p>HOUSEWORK</p> <p>Assist in completing some work around the house each day, e.g. unload the dishwasher, help make dinner, fold the clothes.</p>	<p>FATHER'S DAY</p> <p>Next Sunday is Father's Day. Make a special 'Gift voucher' for Dad. Your voucher might be for: breakfast in bed, wash the car, assist in the garden, etc.</p>
<p>IT'S SPRING!</p> <p>Design a 'Word Splash' poster showing your favourite things about this season.</p>	<p>SCRABBLE FUN!</p> <p>You have these letters left on your rack. How many words can you make?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">A S E T D I R</p> <p>We will add up your score on Friday.</p>	<p>RELAXATION</p> <p>Have some quiet time.</p>

The tasks in DARK BLUE – must be completed.

The tasks in LIGHT BLUE – choose two to complete.

The tasks in WHITE – choose one to complete.

Front of the Homework Grid.

I _____ have overseen my child _____

complete the activities listed below.

Comment _____

Signed _____

Tick the activities you have completed each day.

WEEKEND (optional)	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY
<input type="checkbox"/> Read	<input type="checkbox"/> Read	<input type="checkbox"/> Read	<input type="checkbox"/> Read	<input type="checkbox"/> Read
<input type="checkbox"/> Fill in reading diary	<input type="checkbox"/> Fill in reading diary	<input type="checkbox"/> Fill in reading diary	<input type="checkbox"/> Fill in reading diary	<input type="checkbox"/> Fill in reading diary
<input type="checkbox"/> Housework	<input type="checkbox"/> Housework	<input type="checkbox"/> Housework	<input type="checkbox"/> Housework	<input type="checkbox"/> Housework
<input type="checkbox"/> Relaxation	<input type="checkbox"/> Relaxation	<input type="checkbox"/> Relaxation	<input type="checkbox"/> Relaxation	<input type="checkbox"/> Relaxation
<input type="checkbox"/> Computer	<input type="checkbox"/> Computer	<input type="checkbox"/> Computer	<input type="checkbox"/> Computer	<input type="checkbox"/> Computer
<input type="checkbox"/> Father's Day	<input type="checkbox"/> Father's Day	<input type="checkbox"/> Father's Day	<input type="checkbox"/> Father's Day	<input type="checkbox"/> Father's Day
<input type="checkbox"/> Maths game	<input type="checkbox"/> Maths game	<input type="checkbox"/> Maths game	<input type="checkbox"/> Maths game	<input type="checkbox"/> Maths game
<input type="checkbox"/> Be read to	<input type="checkbox"/> Be read to	<input type="checkbox"/> Be read to	<input type="checkbox"/> Be read to	<input type="checkbox"/> Be read to
<input type="checkbox"/> Scrabble fun	<input type="checkbox"/> Scrabble fun	<input type="checkbox"/> Scrabble fun	<input type="checkbox"/> Scrabble fun	<input type="checkbox"/> Scrabble fun
<input type="checkbox"/> Spring	<input type="checkbox"/> Spring	<input type="checkbox"/> Spring	<input type="checkbox"/> Spring	<input type="checkbox"/> Spring

Back of the Homework Grid.

2 House points

Love them or hate them, house points can be an effective motivator. Students can routinely be awarded house points for:

- ☀ completing homework tasks (see above)
- ☀ returning notices promptly (see Notices folder)
- ☀ 'spot checks' on an odd occasion for tidy tubs or chair bags; notices folder at school today; anyone with their name written on their work
- ☀ specific desirable behaviours being targeted
- ☀ extra help given or kindness observed in action.

House points accumulate over the week. Students can record their own points on a piece of coloured card, then add them with a calculator as a weekly maths task. Amounts awarded can be in 10s, 20s, 50s and 100s for lower primary, with numbers increasing over the years of school to match the students' ability to add larger numbers so that, by the upper school, students' weekly totals are in the 1000s.

House point winners can receive a simple prize such as a pick from the \$2 box (usually stationery) or a half-hour free-time certificate, with the winning house overall perhaps choosing a game for Friday afternoon.

<i>Molly</i>
<i>Week 6</i>
20 100
20

Year 2

<i>Ben</i>					<i>Term 2</i>				
<i>Week 1</i>	<i>Week 2</i>	<i>Week 3</i>	<i>Week 4</i>	<i>Week 5</i>					
100 100	100								
500 50	100								
250	75								
50									
<i>Total: 1050</i>	<i>Total:</i>	<i>Total:</i>	<i>Total:</i>	<i>Total:</i>					
<i>Week 6</i>	<i>Week 7</i>	<i>Week 8</i>	<i>Week 9</i>	<i>Week 10</i>					
<i>Total:</i>	<i>Total:</i>	<i>Total:</i>	<i>Total:</i>	<i>Total:</i>					

Year 5

Individual 'House points' cards can be made by students. The Year 2 example will last for a fortnight, using front and back. The Year 5 example will last for a term.

3 VIP monitors

For younger students, the simplest and most efficient system for classroom monitors that we have ever used is the VIP system. Each week, one boy and one girl are the VIPs. They do all the jobs and errands for one week. It is a busy week as VIP but we have found – without exception – that students love their turn. Simply go down the roll (with boys and girls listed separately) and use Velcro name cards (see page 29) to display the week's students on the VIP chart.

4 Show and tell surprise box

Each week the large 'Show and Tell' box goes home with a different student. Students bring three special items hidden in the box to share with the class. The idea is that students 'surprise' the class with something a little out of the ordinary.

This routine is used at the start of the year to help the group (and the teacher) get to know its members better. Once all students have had a turn, the routine ceases.

5 You teach

This activity is an absolute highlight for the teacher and students in grades 4–6.

After everyone's had a go at the 'Show and Tell' box, timetable a weekly peer-teaching session. The students pick a skill that they already know and have a turn at 'being the teacher' by teaching this skill to the rest of the class.

We have found that all students are capable of this, especially if they choose to work with a partner (though some may need help selecting their skill). The students are responsible for preparing the lesson, setting it up and giving feedback to their peers on the work produced in the session.

- 1 First, put up a chart and give students a week or so to choose a skill. Suggestions include:
 - ☀ using a vanishing point to draw in 3D
 - ☀ drawing a particular style of fancy lettering, or a border style
 - ☀ folding an origami object
 - ☀ how to do the perfect drop-kick
 - ☀ making felt (or stitched) bookmarks
 - ☀ drawing a particular cartoon character
 - ☀ finger knitting
 - ☀ calculator word puzzles
 - ☀ making lolly houses (using soft lollies and toothpicks)
 - ☀ making mini-pavlovas
 - ☀ making fruit smoothies.
- 2 Assign students/pairs to a particular week. Try to timetable students with strong oral language skills to do their teaching first, as the skills involved in the teaching process will then be modelled to the class.
- 3 The students must prepare for their teaching session by drawing up a list of required items and collecting the items. They also need to write a procedural text for their skill. The teacher needs to photocopy the procedure, one for every student.

- 4 Students conduct their lesson. Emphasise to the class that respect is to be shown to the students teaching. (Remove the first one to misbehave and you will quickly get the message across.)
- 5 At the end of the lesson, give some feedback to the person teaching and ask the class what they think worked well in the session.
- 6 Students collect the work samples produced by the class and write a comment for each. Many students like to give stickers and award a mark out of 10 for their peers' efforts. We have found them to be generous in their praise and marking which is so lovely to see.
- 7 We include the 'You teach' activity as a portfolio task as it is so rich in information. Included in the portfolio piece is the students' list of requirements, their procedure, a captioned photograph of them teaching, and a rubric assessment (see BLM 3, page 140).

Relief teachers: Have a WOD (Work of the Day) board where great work on the day you are there is displayed.



Building self-confidence and self-esteem

Self-esteem is everything. The students with good self-esteem like themselves. They know they can perform well so there is less reason for them to misbehave. As their teacher for a day, a week, or a year, we can help build their self-esteem. Here are some tried and true routines for helping to increase self-love and self-confidence.

1 WOW

This stands for 'Work of the Week', and we usually award it to several students in the class each week. (Very occasionally it may be given to a whole class.) Students receive a certificate at Assembly and their names are printed in the school newsletter. Most importantly, *the actual work is displayed* in a prominent place on the school WOW board. Students and parents love seeing their work displayed here and it is a fantastic way for everyone to see what things are happening across the school each week.

2 Values

There are several terrific values programs widely in use in schools. Programs such as the *Healthy Relationships Program*, *You Can Do It!* and *Tribes* each provide a clear and simple framework for teaching values explicitly to students. It is usual practice for the whole school to follow a particular program, so check out which framework your school is using.

In a nutshell, the *Healthy Relationships Program* (Karen Brunskill, Oxford University Press, 1998) focuses on a value each week. There are 36 values covered, for example, honesty, kindness, self-discipline and orderliness, with definitions, reasons for using the value and role-play examples for each.

The *You Can Do It!* program focuses on the 'Five keys to success': Confidence, Persistence, Organisation, Getting along and Resilience. Each key area is developed over several weeks, with a range of lesson-plan suggestions for different grade levels which aim to build healthy Habits of the Mind.

The Tribes process focuses on building community and on developing understandings of cooperation and fair play. The emphasis is on everyone having a say, everyone being heard and everyone having a go.

As with Workers of the Week, students are awarded certificates for exemplifying the value which is the specific focus for that week. The certificates are presented (with suitable fuss and celebration) at Assembly. The names are publicised in the weekly newsletter.

3 Standing ovations

We love this idea, along with the book in which we found it: *PLAYFAIR, Everybody's Guide to Non-Competitive Play* by Matt Weinstein and Joel Goodman (Impact Publishers, California, 1980). The authors write:

Why should performing artists be the only ones who get to savour a standing ovation? We all deserve it! A standing ovation should be reserved not only for a special occasion, but for a special person as well. And that means all of us! It feels wonderful to receive, and it can be incredibly energising to give one, too...

Of course it happens on occasion that the leader paints such an attractive portrait of group support that everyone rushes up to receive some, leaving no-one in the audience to give the standing ovation...

At a university in Ohio, so many people responded to an invitation to receive some group support that the entire stage sank slowly under their combined weight.

In the classroom, you could ask if anyone is feeling sad. Then ask them if they would like a magnificent, thunderous standing ovation. Encourage them to come out the front, and then let fly!

If at any time during the day (or year) someone needs a quick boost, you might let them leap on their desk and shout, 'I need a standing ovation!' Actually, we are not altogether convinced about the any time, any place standing ovation. We have the feeling that they might go on all the time! Perhaps just now and then.

4 Compliment books

Compliment books are reminiscent of the autograph books of old. Over the course of the week, students write a personal affirmation (compliment) to every other student in the class in their individual A5-sized compliment book. Draft compliments can be written on a class list, checked by the teacher, then ticked off as they are written into the compliment book. This is best suited to the older grades as it is a bit complicated to organise the passing around of all the books. We have found that students treasure their compliment books. A few extra pages can be included for family members or other friends to add compliments as well.

Hint: We like to write a compliment for each student on the first page of their book also. The kudos you will get is well worth the time it will take you.

5 Class nicknames

We love these. Class nicknames can have a theme, for example, Bailey Banana, Tyson Tasty Cheese and Catherine Cupcake; or maybe Baizza, Tyzza, and Cazza; or they can just be wild and wacky. They can last all year or even a day. One teacher we know let students nominate nicknames that lasted for a game of rounders!

Surprisingly, nicknames can help you (and the students) to remember everyone's names as well.

Note: Students must give permission for the nickname to be used.

6 The friendship tree

Find an interestingly shaped branch and stick it into a plant pot using florist's foam or similar. Place it in the classroom, together with a supply of pre-cut blank leaf shapes. Students write comments about other students in the class who have been a good friend /helped them/ been generous, etc. on a leaf shape and then hang it on the tree. This tree can be added to over, say, a term, with students taking their own leaves home.



Variation: A friendship tree in the playground

A large cardboard tree marks the spot. Older students organise games or activities for younger ones who might be bored or lonely – or just want to join in the fun.

The older students stick notices on the tree listing What, Where, When (examples: chess, colouring sheets, skipping). It works like clubs but is much more fluid.

We have found that the rostered older students really look forward to their day of duty and the high participation rates of students playing at the friendship tree speak for themselves.

7 The worry tree

In the corner of the classroom, a knobbly collection of sticks is arranged in the form of a tree. Below is a big sign: The Worry Tree.

Start with a 'worry session'. Each student writes on a card things that really worry them. Then the whole class brainstorms possible solutions which are written on the back of the card and the card is attached to the worry tree.

Of course, the whole-class discussions are only about non-private worries. There is plenty of space for students to place their own card on the tree anonymously. Others can then write solutions.



8 The hot seat

A hot seat is an excellent way of providing a little stage for students. It's also an effective way of filling in a few spare minutes. This is not a punishment, but simply one student's turn in the spotlight (for example, spelling out words, showing their tables knowledge, reading to the class). Most students look forward to their turn in the hot seat. For the others, it's good practice at being in front of the group!



9 Personal biographies

This is a game for the teacher who is new to the class. Make a ball out of crumpled paper. The ball is thrown by one student to another. When the student catches it, they call out their name and something about themselves. It could be:

- ☀ favourite game
- ☀ something nobody knows about them
- ☀ favourite breakfast cereal
- ☀ best place to go for a holiday, etc.

This can be followed up by making a Personal Biographies book where the students write about themselves on a separate page for a book which can eventually be shared by the whole class.

10 Trumpet it

We had a competition at school for the best Town Crier. In the best tradition of Old London Town, the crier had to make important announcements at the appropriate time – such as when students are eating lunch – from classroom to classroom in the most authoritative but controlled voice. So successful was she that she became our Assembly announcer and then truly did progress to make a profound announcement about the school in our local township.

This gave rise to 'Trumpet it'. To increase self-esteem, the students were encouraged to declare four of their most important goals, to write them down and to state the date by which they would all be achieved.

I, Lin Lin Chan, declare that by 31st December 2009, I want the following things to have happened.

- 1 To smile more and be happier to my friends, family and with other people.*
- 2 To be healthier.*
- 3 To work on my times tables a lot.*
- 4 To have made Christmas presents for all of my family and to have tried my best.*

Signed, Lin Lin Chan

11 Cubes

There are many means by which the students can create a picture of themselves. 'Cubes' is one of the best because so much information can be contained in a small space, and the information can be conveniently displayed around the classroom in mobile form.

The student glues a photo or drawing to one side of the cube. The remaining five sides are used to illustrate or write about themselves. Aspects to be covered could be:

- ☀ name and date of birth
- ☀ zodiac sign
- ☀ pets
- ☀ details of family
- ☀ finger prints
- ☀ what you are best at, in school and out of school
- ☀ what you like to do most, in school and out of school
- ☀ what your friends like about you
- ☀ ambitions
- ☀ preferred sports, activities, holidays, etc.
- ☀ most important achievement so far
- ☀ current and next goals.

See BLM 4 on page 141 for a blank cube net.

12 Birthdays

We all know how much students love and look forward to their birthdays, so why not make use of all this excitement and good will?

Students' birthdays provide an excellent opportunity to utilise fun routines which celebrate each individual student as a special part of the whole group. Thus the esteem of each student plus the group's cohesiveness are built upon.

One bonus about birthday routines is that the students are unlikely to let you forget! We always mark students' birthdays on our large class calendar along with a little birthday sticker.

This way the month's birthdays are anticipated along with other special events.

4th month APRIL 2009 Autumn						
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
	Tuesday <i>treats</i>	1 Ashley's <i>birthday</i>	2	3 Term 1 <i>ends</i>	4	5
6	7	8	9	10 Good Friday	11	12 Scott's <i>birthday</i>
← HOLIDAYS →						
13 Easter Monday	14	15	16	17	18	19
← HOLIDAYS →						
20 Term 2 <i>starts</i>	21	22 Puppet <i>show</i>	23	24	25 Anzac Day	26
27	28 Ben's <i>birthday</i>	29	30 Emily's <i>birthday</i>	Book <i>club due</i>		

Special birthday activities include:

- VIP for the day.** The birthday student is presented with a 'tiara', funny birthday hat or 'cool' character mask to wear and is VIP for the day. The VIP can do any messages or jobs on this day (or delegate if they wish). Work is still completed but the VIP may select (or draw from a hat) classmates to collect workbooks or supplies needed, hand in their work, collect lunch, etc. for them, while they sit back and enjoy it. During time on the mat the VIP may choose to sit on a chair at the back. You can also allocate a half hour on birthday days for an activity of the VIP's choosing.



- Birthday banner.** This is a very simple and easy birthday celebration. We have a 'Happy Birthday' banner which we drape around the birthday student's chair before they come into class in the morning. We also have a 'Happy Birthday' sign in a plastic stand to sit on the table for the day. We write a birthday card and give a small gift (such as a pencil with a fancy rubber on top, a bookmark, even a chocolate).

- Gigantic birthday cards.** These are made up of a large cardboard birthday card with individual cards inside. Students write a warm message or birthday wish to the birthday student inside a small, pre-cut card and decorate the front. Paste the individual cards in rows inside the large card (this may take some training, or find a particularly neat and coordinated class member or two to do this for you) and present to the birthday student at the end of the day. So, for 24 students in the class you'll need 24 small cards to fit inside the large cardboard card (i.e. 24 minus the birthday person and plus you!).

Note: These gigantic cards make wonderful class thank you cards as well; receivers of them are often quite overwhelmed.

- Birthday Big Book.** This is a variation on the gigantic birthday card concept. In this version each student in the grade completes one page of a class book about the birthday person. Each student should write – honestly and positively – what they like about the birthday person and draw a picture as well. The teacher binds all the pages together inside a cover and this is given to the birthday student before going home. Although this requires a writing session for each birthday person, the writing itself can be a valuable part of your program rather than an interruption to it. When writing this particular piece, the routine for us is: i) draft; ii) re-read to edit-check and add an adjective or two; iii) teacher check; iv) write a good copy and illustrate.