

# Epic Ideas for Ending the Year Well

One of the things we don't do well in schools is celebrating. Even when we achieve success and have clearly made progress, the celebration tends to be short lived. We can almost be flippant as we deflect the glory and then eagerly look for the next problem to solve.

I think this happens for a number of reasons:

- 1 We are always busy in schools with a lot to do, especially at this time of the year.
- 2 We are constantly working at improving our schools. We look for problems or issues as they highlight potential areas for improvement. Even if our school is doing great things, we tend to be on the lookout for where they "could be even better!"
- 3 Our work in schools is never ending. There is always MORE that could be done....more planning, more consultation, more research, more professional development etc.

As we come to the end of the year it is important that we celebrate learning. It is better to celebrate and get closure on the year of learning than let our year fizzle and fade without a whimper. Here are some epic ways to celebrate that have been inspired by great educators.

## Make a Top 10 List

"Teach Like A Pirate" guru Dave Burgess suggests having students make their Top 10 list of what they had learned during the year (Think "Late Night Show" with David Letterman).

## Don't Pack Up Too Soon

Angela Watson advises NOT to pack up your classroom and take down the decorations and displays too soon. It sends the wrong message and can make managing student behaviour more challenging.

## Toast Their Success

Bring in bottles of water (one for each student). Tell each student to grab a bottle and crack the lid but not to open it. Raise a toast with a farewell address filled with thoughts, advice, reflections and well wishes for their future. Students can also be encouraged to raise a toast to reflect on what they have learnt and to their future plans.

Alek Wek

## Compliments and Kindness

Two weeks before the school year ends, each student's name is listed on the top of a separate piece of paper. Each piece of paper was circulated around the class and the other students wrote genuine compliments. The teacher (or aide) types up the compliments on a piece of paper and it is displayed on a clear plastic stand. The students then cut up the pictures that have been placed on the wall throughout the year to embellish their personal memory.

## Survey Your Students to Celebrate Their Memories

Survey your students about what they liked, what they learnt and their favourite memory of the year. Turn the answers into a word cloud and display it.

## Plan an Oscars Event

Roll out the red carpet and have students plan the culminating event. Imagine an Oscars-style ceremony where they can give awards for the year's best books, best student presentations and epic classroom moments. You could also expect students to respond with Oscars-style acceptance speeches. Perhaps you could all dress up too?

Thank you to Vicki Davis for the inspiration to end the year with a celebration.

The most beautiful things are not associated with money; they are memories and moments. If you don't celebrate those, they can pass by.

## Key points

*It is important that we celebrate learning*

*Getting closure on the year and reflecting on what we have achieved is important*

*Use one of the strategies listed to facilitate class reflection on their learning and the memories they have made*

*Don't pack up your classroom too early, it send the wrong message*

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