Week 1

Dear NEA Members,

Greetings and welcome back! I hope that you each had a restful summer, caught up on reading and relaxing, and are ready for a new school year. I realize that some of you have already begun in year-round schools, and that for others the first day is just around the corner.

Some of you are familiar with "Works-4-Me" and others are not. It is a weekly e-mail that is sent each Sunday morning that consists of three parts. The first part are six tips for use in the classroom and around the school, they come from the NEA web-site and can be found at "Works-4-Me."

The second part is information about an NEA Member Benefit that you have access to. In order to access all of the information and details, you must register on the NEA Member Benefits web-site. To do this follow these steps:

1. Go to the NEA Member Benefits web-site
2. Click on the REGISTER link
3. Register. You will need to use a PERSONAL e-mail address. Unfortunately, we cannot accept school e-mail addresses. You can get a free e-mail address from Google or Yahoo.
4. Write your password down.
5. Go back to the NEA Member Benefits web-site
6. Click LOG-IN, enter your e-mail and password, click GO!
7. Start using your NEA Member Benefits

The third part is an information article that deals with a variety of topics. It might be financial, professional, personal…who knows. But it will come from the NEA Member Benefits web-site.

Greetings! There are many new ideas out there to help teachers. NEA has created a web-site called "Works-4-Me" which are tried and true teaching hints suggested by NEA members. Each week you will receive an e-mail with six helpful (and short) hints to help you in your teaching. They will fall under the following categories:

Teaching Techniques
Content
Getting Organized
Managing Your Classroom
Relationships
Using Technology

In addition, you will get information about your NEA Member Benefits that are available to you through your membership in the Association. Click on the link or visit www.neamb.com.

Teaching Techniques

Student Information Cards

"I keep an information card on all of my students. I pre-print index cards on the computer requesting each student's name, date of birth, address, home number, parents' work and cell phone numbers, the book numbers that they were issued and their email address. I punch all the cards and bind them with a ring. I keep them in my book bag so their information is available to me at school and at home. I just recently thought of pre-printing the information requests on the computer instead of having the kids do all the writing."

Content

Encouraging Students To Read Aloud

"One way to encourage students to read out loud is to send student teams of two, three or four into a corner of the room with a video camera and a reading assignment. At the end of the day, I play three or four minutes of the tape in front of the class. No one knows which minutes will be played. After cycling through the whole class a few times, even some of my less able out loud readers will now volunteer to be taped reading. Choral reading in front of the camera is also something that works for less able readers."

Getting Organized

Keeping Track of Professional Development Paperwork

"To curb frustration at the end of the school year when I have to record all the professional development hours I've accumulated through the year, I tried something that seems to be working. I took a three-ring binder, labeled it 'Workshops for School Year 20__ - 20__.' I take this binder to every workshop or professional development training that I attend and make sure I document the title, date, presenter, location and

hours. I keep paper in the binder for note-taking. I also take handouts from workshops, punch holes in them and keep them in the binder. Now, instead of frantically searching for all those certificates, I have everything I need in one notebook."

Managing Your Classroom

Assigning Seats

"Before the first day of school, I make up seating charts for each class period in alphabetical order keeping the seating boy/girl as much as possible. Instead of having the students stand up while I call out their seat, I place an index card on each desk. The cards list the period number and the student assigned to that particular desk. I write the directions on the board asking them to find their card and I greet the students as they enter the room. They know I mean business when they enter and we don't have to waste time assigning seats. This procedure also helps me learn their names fast as they are sitting in alphabetical order."

Relationships

Beginning Blue's Clues

"When children arrive in my room with their parents for open house, they are handed a clue list with a circle next to each clue, challenging them to find items/places such as the bathroom, sink, paper towels, trashcan, classroom door, cubbies, etc. I hang a handprint and a card at each site telling the children and their parents what to do once they find it, such as 'Turn on the Water' and 'Wash Hands Using the Soap Dispenser.' I also wear a handprint to ensure that everyone gets a chance to talk to me. When the children find an item, they color the circle next to the clue on their paper. When all the spots are colored, they receive a sticker. The children that don't attend open house do this activity with a volunteer the first week of school. This saves an enormous amount of time teaching the children where things are in the classroom. We continue this theme the first week of school and find clues that lead us to the different parts of the building and introduce us to the people that work throughout the school."

Using Technology

Batch Email

"I help parents connect with their child's school experience by staying in touch with them via email. I have found that 50% or more of my parents have email either at home or at work. I send out a batch email every other week to notify them of upcoming events and other important information. The parents can respond with any questions, offer help or make suggestions. I've received many expressions of gratitude from parents for this extra bit of communication."

NEA Member Benefit Article of the Week:

Getting to Know You

Proven icebreakers for the first day of school.

Date published: Monday, August 10, 2009

By Alysia Clancy

While the first day of school is full of rules, expectations and seating arrangements, it's important to take some time for icebreakers. Icebreakers that are actively engaging can turn up the fun while helping you learn a bit more about your new students. We've collected these K-12 tried-and-true activities from fellow NEA members:

Elementary school:

For most early elementary teachers, the first few weeks is about making young students comfortable in the classroom and the larger school building. Most kindergarten teachers spend several weeks working with their students to just be comfortable in the classroom and with all the new people in the school. Most five- and six-year-olds simply can't remember all the new names and faces on that first day.

- Kristin Jardine, a kindergarten teacher at Moscow Elementary Center in Pennsylvania, sends a letter to her students before school even starts. She introduces herself, tells them she is going to bring in something about herself for the first day and invites students to bring in something about themselves to share with their new friends. Mrs. Jardine brings in a family picture while students bring stuffed animals or photos or a souvenir from a summer vacation. According to Mrs. Jardine, a successful first day of kindergarten is "keeping the tears away, getting everyone to eat their lunch and getting everyone on the correct bus to go home."

- Tracy Winslow, a fourth-grade Spanish Immersion teacher at the Memorial Elementary School in Massachusetts, uses several icebreakers to get to know students, as well as give her an idea of their comprehension levels. She has found that activities in which students work in teams are a favorite for her and them. In one such team activity, Mrs. Winslow places several copies of a children's story around her classroom. Students are paired up and choose one to be the "runner" and another to be the "writer." The runner goes to a copy of the story, reads a few words, and then returns to their partner who transcribes what the runner tells them. After 5 minutes whoever has correctly written most of the story wins a prize.

Middle school:

- On the first day of school, Donna West, a seventh-grade math teacher at North Pocono Middle School, has students write down 2 fun facts about themselves. The students then go around the room sharing their facts out loud. Mrs. West says she holds on to the cards and reads them again several months later when she knows the students better.

- When Robyn Babina taught fifth grade in New Canaan, CT, icebreakers were vital since the school started at fifth grade and most students did not know each other. Mrs. Babina says the school spent 2 full days helping students get acquainted, starting with name games and ending with team-building activities. One of the best activities to help students learn names is "Pass the Ball." To play, students stand in a circle and pass a ball around with each student reciting the next student's name. For example, Katie would pass the ball to Cole saying "Here you go Cole." Cole replies, "Thanks Katie" and then passes the ball to Mia saying "Here you are Mia" and on around the circle. Mrs. Babina says scavenger hunts are also a great way to have students work together while learning about a classroom or an entire school building.

High school:

- Kathy Gilbride from Moscow, PA, had her students write down three interesting facts about themselves on the first day. For the second day of school, this former geometry teacher turned high school librarian would create a worksheet listing 1 fact for each student in the class. Students were given 10 minutes at the beginning of class to interview their peers and match one classmate to each fact. Mrs. Gilbride said even students who've been together for years usually learn something new.

- Brian Jardine, an English teacher at North Pocono High School in Pennsylvania, makes it a point to learn every student's name before the end of their first class together, even making a game of it. He allows students to switch seats to try and throw him off. "Students of all ages appreciate the fact a teacher knows their name."

Don't forget, most importantly the first day of school is your chance to make a strong first impression. You want to be sure to start the year with your students knowing where you stand on attendance, grading and classroom rules. Mrs. West's advice for new teachers is to "be firm and consistent beginning with day one." Mrs. Davis agrees. She advises starting off the year as strict as possible so later you can reward good behavior by loosening up a little.

So go ahead and find a fun icebreaker activity or two. Check out the Lessons & Activities page for some ideas. It will inject a much-needed break for you and your students into the first day of school routine.

For additional information, go to:

- Education World
- About.com
- A to Z Teacher Stuff

Do you have successful icebreaker activities you rely on each year? Share them with your colleagues on our TeachAde community site.

Source: http://www.neamb.com/home/1216_2888.htm