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Ideas about Back-to-School Open House

(from the Grade 5-6 Connection listserv)

Dear friends,

I just found out that my new school will have Back to School Night on the second day of school!

I'm curious: just what does this "Back to School Night" entail? Is this an open house where everyone just looks around or more like a parent's night where you have to explain your program? The second day of school is a bit much, you won't even have time to catch your breath!

Could you share "First Day" activities that have worked for you. I'm looking for stuff that go right up on the walls!

Mark

Oh well, I guess you have to do what you have to do! Along with the ideas stated previously and since you need something to put up immediately, why not have the kids do each other's silhouettes? In the past I've done them myself, one kid at a time, but since time is of the essence, have the kids partner up. I used the overhead projector to shine on the child who was sitting in front of a black piece of paper and then took chalk and sketched the outline. When finished, I smoothed the outline and then cut it out, turned it over and mounted it on another paper or bulletin board. You can use any color paper and the shadow is easier to see on some than others, but I used black to give the idea of a shadow.

As an extension you could make a bulletin board display with a title, ie. Getting to Know Us; A Foreshadow of Things to Come; Can You Pick Us Out? etc. This is just off the top of my head, so just refine the title or use your own, or have the kids think of something.

Now have the kids either interview their partner or write their own short "bio" which gives clues about the person without naming names. The "bios" could go directly with each picture or separately so that people could see if they could match them up.

I hope this make sense, because my "school brain" has been turned off since May 22nd!

Kathy O'Mara

I have traced the silhouette on manila drawing paper, placed that on top of a black of a sheet of black construction paper, and cut through both. The black copy can then be mounted on another sheet for a silhoutte and the manila can be used to draw in features and color a self portrait. Two activities in one!

Joanne

Mark,

My district has parent orientation nights the two days before school starts. This is really difficult because I haven't met most of the kids yet. We all just tell how we hope the year to go, rules (our own classroom and the district), and policy type things. I would see your situation as an advantage since you get to meet the kids first and then can try to put parents and kids together in your head. Kathy had some great ideas, I'd go with them. Good Luck, I'm sure you'll do fine.

Stacie/6th

Hi everyone,

We are having our open house the first week of school. In the past we had it in October, by then parents that wondered about policies, had questions, etc. had already spoke with you. Consequently, you have parents that wanted to discuss grades and what the upcoming report card would be like. We hope to like the early open house. We had thought that maybe the first week in getting to know students you could whip up some projects. I know someone had posted the We/Me idea last year. I used it and it was wonderful and fun.

Luann

I do not remember who originally posted this idea but here goes to the best of my memory..... My students sit in groups of 4 or 5. On white construaction paper write the letters in bubble type font WE, when flipped over it will read ME. The students discuss their likes dislikes in the group. On the ME side they write about themselves, on the WE side they write about similarities within the group. I then hang these from the lights above their groups.

Luann

Luann and all,

For the past two years we have had an open house the week night before student started school. The students may come with the parents. They get to see the classroom and learn policies. I have really enjoyed it

because you can meet the parents on positive terms and it seems to start the year out on a positive foot. Then when you need to talk to the parents about not so positive matters you feel like you have already broken the ice. All the paper work is taken care of that night and the first day of school with the students can be an educational one and not all paper work. I think more parents show up because it is more of a positive meeting than just looking at Johnnies low grades. Hope yours will be as positive. Good luck.

Nancy Hunt

I am enjoying the back-to-school discussions, even though I am still 7 weeks from going back. The first week in our school is always tentative, much to my frustration. There is always so much juggling taking place, that it is difficult to do anything involving parents, or students. Even students at the Grade 5/6 level get attached to the teacher and fellow students, making a sudden move very difficult. For example, I always start off the year with a family weiner roast and horse rides at our place. The students come by bus just after lunch, and parents come at 4ish. We have a scavenger hunt, games, rides and food. By 7:00, everybody is gone. It has always been a great beginning to the year. Even though we do this about the third week of school, the students look forward to it as soon as they know they are in my class. Does anyone else hesitate to build excitement for the year because of the predicted movement of students?

Phyl

Several people have mentioned the silhouette idea. Here's another idea. Be sure the silhouette is of the side profile. Put another sheet of black paper under the original so that you will have 2 copies when you cut it out. If your paper is too heavy, just trace the first one onto the second paper, and then cut it out.

Now have them place the silhouettes on white paper so that the noses are 1-2 inches apart. Students can move them around until they are satisfied with the design. Glue the silhouettes into place, and cut off all the extra parts that are not on the white paper. You now have a personal "What do you see, the vase or the faces?" Parents could try to find the one that belongs to their child. Kids love guessing games, and have fun with parents doing the guessing.

If you wanted to, you could cut the straight edges of the silhouettes before you glue them on to the paper. Then leave a border on the outside edges before you glue. This gives it a framed look.

Phyl

Phyl,

I can see why students would like to be in your room. I can't imagine having a weiner roast and horseback ride for my students. I think our principal would die. He is so afraid of liability. We don't have

horses but a large yard in the country. I would like to adapt that in some way. I usually have around 50 students every year however. That might be a few weiners. I'll talk to my teaching partner.
NHunt

I have used the silhouette idea before as a cover for a booklet that we made during the year--titled 6th grade profile. We included other things in the booklet--some of which escape me at the moment. Examples: interview, history of and meaning of names, high and low points of life, earliest memories.

I haven't done this for a few years--kind of tiring. But I think I'll try it again this year and see how it works. It makes a nice project for the year. If anyone is interested in more information, let me know and I'll look up the file and send it out.

Ellen

We have back to school night the Thursday prior to school opening. It is a time to introduce the staff to the families. The kids get to check out their classrooms and find out who their teachers are and which other kids are in their classes. We call it an ice cream social. The teachers serve ice cream that the PTA provides. The parents also get to find out about the fund raisers, and other PTA things going on. Everyone seems to love it.

Hope this helps.

Kathy W