



# A GREAT YEAR Ahead

BY INES C. BAUTISTA

Before the new school year grabs you by the collar with all its demands, here's how to make the most out of this summer so you can face SY 2004-05 with enthusiasm and confidence!

**f**inally—summer time! You made it through another school year, and now you have a few months without classes to look forward to. This is a great time to reflect, gain some new ideas, and gather the energy to start anew in June. Often, you don't need a major, life-changing event to improve how you're going to tackle the new school year. You'll be amazed at how these simple steps can add spice to your tired old lesson plans and a bit of spring in your weary step.



## **1** Do something different

You know your lesson plans and class activities work. That's why you've been using them all these years. But admit it, you're getting a little tired of saying and doing the same things year after year. The prospect of changing something can be uncomfortable, though. The best way to fight boredom without overhauling your tried-and-tested strategies? Just change one small thing you do every year.

It can be as simple as changing the way you greet your class every morning. Instead of just saying "Good morning, class," and waiting for them to reply, try asking them a question like "What nice thing happened to you before you went to school today?" This will encourage them to recite, interact, and think of the positive side to their morning.

You can challenge yourself by removing a story from your syllabus that you've been teaching for ten years and replacing it with one you just read and liked very much. What's exciting is that you'll be learning alongside your students!

If you aren't sure about what to change, ask a co-teacher what fun things he brings into his classroom; swap ideas and techniques. There are a lot of possibilities and what you do is all up to you.

## **2** Set non-negotiable dates

How many times have you brushed off a child who needed attention because you were too swamped by paperwork, or rejected an evening out with your husband because you needed to plan for the next day's lesson?

On the coming school year's calendar, don't just mark the dates of meetings and periodic exams, encircle those days you will devote to individual students who need you, and to family and loved ones. These dates will be your non-negotiables. Don't allow busy-work to get in the way of being a real teacher and loving person. Resolve to spend time with the people who matter in your life.

## **3** Take a break this summer

This summer, treat yourself to time with the person who figures greatly in your life—you. Take walks or just sit quietly and reflect on what you want out of the next school year. Or don't think at all. Just be observant of what's going on around you.

Indulge your creative side. Keep a journal and jot down your thoughts. Since your mind isn't cluttered with student reports, behavioral issues and failing grades, it will be free to explore other ideas. If you don't feel like writing, staple sheets of bond paper together and start a visual journal. Draw, color, cut out pictures from magazines or newspapers and just enjoy yourself. Who knows, you might come across some ideas you can use in class!

Find some peace and quiet. Ask your husband, sister, mother, or best friend to take the kids off your hands and spend an entire day alone doing your favorite thing in the whole world. Have you ever dreamed of watching TV all day? Staying in bed until four in the afternoon? Finishing

ILLUSTRATION BY: MIKKE GALLARDO

the novel you never had time to read last school year? Now is the time to do it. And because *Star Teacher* says so, it's totally guilt-free! Grant yourself this time. You deserve it.

For more ideas on taking a real summer vacation, see our article in page 15.



#### Own a mantra

When the papers start to pile up and the grades are due in less than a week, it's hard to remember that list of resolutions you made during the summer. Instead of wasting your frustration on unfulfilled goals, just think of one goal you want to achieve this school year. What do you want to focus on or improve in yourself? Sum it up in one word. This will be your mantra for SY 2004–05. Make sure it is a powerful word, one that will remind you of what you want and is strong enough to take you there. Some of my favorites are:

**feel** breathe  
**accept** passion  
**listen** love create

Now that you have your mantra, it's not enough to know it and repeat it to yourself. When there are too many demands on your attention and emotions, you may not even remember what a mantra is! So take a sheet of paper (it must be as large as a short-sized bond paper or even bigger) and write down your mantra in big, bold letters. You can decorate it too, which is a good exercise in relaxation and creativity. Finally, tack it up where you can always see it—on your desk, lesson plan folder, grade book, or mirror. Let the power of one word change your attitude and outlook this year.



#### Visualize success

You're almost ready for a fabulous SY 2004–05, but before you jump into it, there's one more thing you need to do this summer—close your eyes and “see” the new school year. Run through each quarter in your head. How do you want it to proceed? If there are any sticky situations along the way, how will you fix them? What do you want to feel at the end of the school year? How will you achieve that? Picture yourself doing everything right next year. Imagine all your new strategies being greeted with success from your students and administrators. See your mantra sustaining you when the load gets heavy. Feel the fulfillment that can only come with being a teacher. When you open your eyes, you will greet the new school year with an open mind and a heart bursting with all the love your students thirst for. Can you think of a better year than that? ★

#### ABOUT THE WRITER:

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## DARE TO BE DIFFERENT

### More out-of-the-box ideas

The Internet is a great place for new ideas and teaching techniques. Here are our favorites from some websites we sampled.

#### From Education World ([www.education-world.com](http://www.education-world.com))

Turn one wall of your classroom into a Word Wall and see your students learning new words more quickly. You can feature a new letter each week and put up words that begin with this letter. Or feature different categories such as animals, transportation, bodies of water, fruits, and the like. Also display pictures to illustrate the words on your Word Wall.

#### From Teachers Net ([www.teachers.net](http://www.teachers.net))

The start of a new school year is the perfect time to start a Learning Journal. Take a notebook and divide it into four columns. Label the columns “What and Why,” “Results,” “Reflections,” and “Next Steps.” Record unusual or thought-provoking things that happened during your workday, such as dealing with a difficult student or parent, the result of a new lesson plan, the implementation of a new program, or something a student did very well. This will help you learn from your daily experiences, which hopefully will result in new and more intelligent approaches to teaching.

#### From Tops Learning Systems ([www.topscience.org](http://www.topscience.org))

Enforce class rules with a positive Consequence Box. On a stack of index cards, write down consequences like “list three ways you can handle a disagreement without fighting,” or “look up the word COOPERATION in the dictionary. Write down an example showing what cooperation means.” Whenever a student breaks a class rule, quietly bring up the matter and ask him or her to pick a card from the consequence box and respond to the question written on it.

#### From Instructor Magazine Online ([www.scholastic.com/instructor](http://www.scholastic.com/instructor))

Every week, assign a student to be on “Dictionary Duty.” Whenever your class comes across a word they don't understand in their readings, the student on duty is responsible for looking up this word in the dictionary and sharing its meaning with the class. Don't forget to rotate Dictionary Duty regularly!

#### From Teaching Tips ([www.teachingtips.com](http://www.teachingtips.com))

Summer is the perfect time to arrange your classroom in preparation for the school year. Some things to consider: Make sure you can see all the students and that they can all see you. Have cheerful, welcoming bulletin boards. Display a chart of classroom guidelines and discuss this with your students on the first day of school. Make sure they understand that you mean business!

No Internet connection in school? Try an Internet café. For as little as P60, you get an hour's worth of web time. Get a group of three teachers to each donate P20, and you can all share in the ideas you come across!

WHAT YOU MUST KNOW ABOUT...

# Self Esteem

BY NANETTE LORENZO-SANTOS

## "Now I've said my ABCs Won't you say you're proud of me?"

As soon as children master the alphabet song, they learn to sing it over and over to the delight their parents, who reward them with hugs, smiles, and much praise. An event as simple as this is one of the building blocks of self-esteem. When a child is proud of herself, she develops positive self-esteem, which in turn influences how a child behaves, makes choices, and takes risks.

### WHAT IS SELF ESTEEM?

Self-esteem is the value an individual places on himself. This is built slowly through his experiences with different people and activities. Learning to like oneself starts during the early childhood years, with parents as the primary influence.

### SELF ESTEEM IN SCHOOL

Educators play a pivotal role in making the child feel accepted when she reaches school age. Many of us know that a child's feeling of self-worth is linked with her success. However, we may be unaware of how easy it is to damage a child's self-esteem.

As teachers who interact with our young students on a daily basis, we must review our teaching style to see if we're helping or hurting our students' confidence and sense of achievement. Here are some simple guidelines to follow.

## 10 Do's

**1 Celebrate each student's success**, no matter how small. If the results are less-than-perfect, remain encouraging and simply ask, "What do you think about your project? What did you learn even if it didn't turn out the way you hoped?"

**2 Use non-verbal communication** such as a wink or a thumbs-up sign across the room. It tells the student, "I have confidence in you! I know you can do it!"

**3 Be forgiving of mistakes.** These are wonderful learning opportunities. When a student feels bad about a mistake, say, "That's okay. Let's see what we can learn from this." Send the message that you'd like improvement, not perfection.

**4 Focus on the positive.** Identify and point out what your student is good at, whether it's polite behavior, an extra-curricular activity, or a perfect attendance record.

**5 Display students' artwork, schoolwork, and projects.** This shows them that you value the work they do and think that they're special.

**6 Be sensitive to students** with learning difficulties. Instead of responding to their mistakes with "You don't use your brain!" say "Let's try again."

**7 Allow students to take a chance on an answer** or an idea without the fear of looking foolish. If a student doesn't know the answer, give clues and lead him to the correct response. Avoid saying flat out, "you're wrong!"



*Give your students a precious gift: nurture their self-esteem. In the course of a semester, a quarter, a few weeks, or even chance encounters, it's possible for you to make a difference in how a child sees herself.*

**8 Provide opportunities to apply problem-solving and decision-making skills.** Invite students to think of their own solutions to certain issues instead of providing one right away.

**9 Allow your class to make choices**, such as which Math problem to begin with, or which book to read during Reading Time.

**10 Reinforce responsibility** by getting students involved in activities of social interest. Peer tutoring, decorating the bulletin board, cleaning and other service projects allow students to feel good about making a positive difference.

## 5 Don't's

**1 Don't overemphasize** test scores or other measures of academic achievement. Discover other strengths and areas of intelligence.

**2 When a student misbehaves, don't make him write out a hundred "I will not" promises.** Ask instead, "What happened?" "What caused

it?" "How do you feel?" "What did you learn from this?"

**3 When scolding, don't focus on the student personally.** Instead, point out the particular behavior that needs correcting. Rather than labeling a student "lazy," for example, you could say, "You failed to submit your homework again." Find out her reasons and get to the root of the problem.

**4 When checking papers, don't put red X's beside incorrect answers.** Mark instead the correct answers with large check marks, shifting the

focus on how many items a student answers rather than how many mistakes he made.

**5 Avoid comparisons between students.** Value the individuality of each student and respect unique strengths, needs, talents, and interests.

### A FINAL REMINDER

While creating a life-affirming learning environment for students, teachers should also nurture their own self-esteem. If you are plagued by self-critical thoughts or unfairly harsh on yourself, your students may eventually pick up your pessimism. Think well of yourself, and your students will have an inspiring role model in you. ★

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# A reading record

## FOR SAN FERNANDO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

**S**a Aklat Sisikat Foundation (SAS) had never had to work with such a big school before. For schoolyear 2003–2004, the foundation's biggest challenge was implementing the SAS Reading Program at the San Fernando Elementary School in the City of San Fernando, Pampanga. It was mind-boggling to imagine how students could even manage to learn in lahar-damaged classrooms, with desks and chairs submerged in stagnant water, hordes of mosquitoes flying around, and a student population that can be a barrio in itself. And yet San Fernando Elementary has been recognized as an exemplary and effective school.

SAS donated a total of 1,560 Filipino children's books to 26 Grade Four sections, and for 31 days—together with the dedicated educators of the school—encouraged about 1,500 students to read. Part of the SAS Reading Program is an Ibong Adarna Mural, to which students tape a paper feather whenever they finish reading a book until the mural becomes filled. Normally, one mural is enough for a school, but SAS had to order two extra-large murals for San Fernando Elementary. By the end of the Reading Program, the students had taped almost 100,000 paper feathers to the murals!

### TEACHER TRAINING

During the Teacher Training Workshop held in April 2003, SAS grew quite impressed with the big group of teachers they worked with from San Fernando (27 all in all, plus their principal, Dr. Elena Herrera) who actively participated in the training sessions. Teamwork was highly apparent in their performance during the two-day workshop. Creativity and curiosity were also among their stronger points. They asked a lot of relevant questions and also had many stories to share about their experiences in teaching reading. Their excitement and



*The teachers of San Fernando Elementary School prove by example that learning is fun!*

## 26 Grade Four sections with 1,500 students read 100,000 times in 31 days! How did this school do it?

BY MARGE M. BARRO

eagerness to learn easily infected all the other teachers present in the workshop.

### READING MARATHON

It promised to be an exciting 31-day Read-a-Thon at San Fernando Elementary School. When the Read-a-Thon began, SAS observed that the usual start-up challenges were no different from those in the other participating schools. "Initially, the students had a bit of difficulty in keeping their Reading Progress charts as legible and clean as possible," shares class adviser Mrs. Nida Patio. In their excitement, the kids also scrambled for the best books to read and were careless in their use of Read-a-Thon materials, rattling their teachers a bit.

Mrs. Merly Pineda, teacher of the Grade 4 SPED section that boasted of the school's best and brightest students, was met with a different kind of problem. Her students were voracious readers, and she actually had a fourth grader who breezed through 21 storybooks in just two days!

### CELEBRATE READING!

"We teachers saw the SAS Reading Program as one that has long been needed in the curriculum. It was a fun and most creative way for us to instill the love and habit of reading among our students," explains Mrs. Patio. "And we made sure that as teachers, we had a lot of fun too." The teachers weren't afraid to try out-of-the-box ideas and teaching styles—even reading aloud with costumes and props—and were rewarded with success. Self-discovery through reading stories was a valuable lesson learned, not only by the students but by their teachers as well.

### HOW DID THEY DO IT?

The Reading Program wouldn't have flourished without the efforts of the teachers. "Teamwork is key. We teachers helped out each other in making the workload much lighter," Ms. Patio says proudly. "In cases where resources were lacking, we did not hesitate to pitch in and pool together whatever resources we had to ensure the Reading Program's success." In fact, the teachers voluntarily contributed P25 each just to be able to buy a rolling whiteboard for the Ibong Adarna mural!

Today, San Fernando Elementary School and its teachers remain in a class of their own, an inspiring example of how challenges can be turned into beautiful learning opportunities for students, as well as educators, too. ★