

Creating a Memory Book of Your Class

by Terry Lee Marzell



At my school, every teacher on staff has a Homeroom class. Our school is built for 4,000 students, and the concern is that with a student population that large, a kid could get lost in the shuffle. In Homeroom, the teacher strives to connect with each individual student, fosters team-building among the students in the group, and nurtures those relationships from the first day of their freshman year until the day they graduate. Today, I am going to share with you a strategy I use with my own Homeroom class. It's a scrapbooking idea, and if you like it, you can adapt it to fit your own class needs, whatever they may be.

For this memory book, you will need a photo album or a large three-ring binder, 8 1/2" by 11" scrapbook pages, some page protectors, and some colored papers. I recommend you use acid-free pages and papers available at your local Michael's or scrapbooking store. You could also invest in at least one acid-free journaling pen. If you're into decorating stickers and such, you can buy some ready-made, but personally I prefer a rather simpler-looking page.

At the beginning of each year I ask a colleague to take a photograph of me and my class, and then I print a copy of the roster from the attendance program. These items go into the class memory book. Throughout the year, I add photos of students engaged in our weekly Homeroom activities. If the lesson calls for a written response, I collect a few representative examples and place them in the scrapbook, too. Also, if attend their extra-curricular activities, I take pictures and include those, too. I try to make sure that there is a visual record of some kind of each and every student in the group. At least once a year, I invite the students to create their own personal page to add to the scrapbook.

Since we have the same Homeroom group for all four years they attend high school, I am able to add to the scrapbook every year until their graduation. The memory book becomes a sort of yearbook of just this one class, and it shows how they have physically and socially grown over their high school years. At

the end of their senior year, I offer to make color photocopies of the pages in the book and then I have the pages spiral bound. I only ask that they pay for the printing and binding costs, which is approximately \$10 per copy. After the copies are made, I place the names of every student in the class in a bowl, draw out one name, and give the original scrapbook to the winner. Or you could keep the original as a memento for yourself, if you would like. By the time they graduate, you've probably bonded pretty closely with the kids and would like to keep the memory book to remember them by. Or you can use it as an example for the next group.

I like to put the memory book on display during Open House and Back-to-School Night. Parents love to thumb through the pages and look at the photos and writings of their own kids. Additionally, this scrapbook was very useful when we were going through the accreditation process. It was a visual record of the kinds of things we are doing in Homeroom, and it substantiated our claims that in Homeroom we are forming important relationships with our students.

I have gotten a lot of positive feedback to the scrapbook idea throughout the years. Feel free to create a scrapbook of your class. The kids (and your administrators) will love