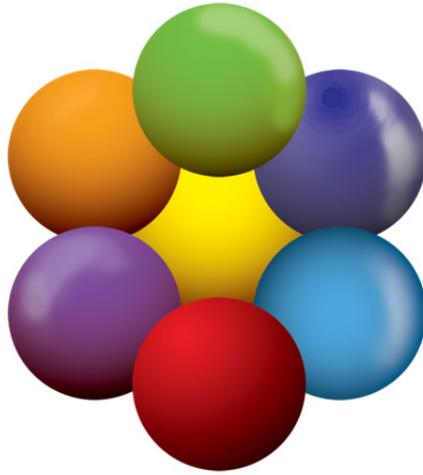


Just ASK's

Celebrating Our Year!

**Celebration, Reflections,
and Words of Advice**



About Just ASK

The Essential Question of Just ASK's Work

What do schools and classrooms look like when they are organized around a commitment to the achievement of high standards by all students?

Just ASK Publications & Professional Development (Just ASK) is based in Alexandria, Virginia, USA. Established in 1989, Just ASK provides products and services for educators in formats that facilitate a shared understanding and the use of best practice in teaching, learning, and leading in 21st century classrooms, schools, and districts.

Driven by the essential question displayed above, the publications and products developed and distributed by Just ASK are used by Just ASK consultants in their long-term multifaceted work with schools and districts, stand alone for use in professional development initiatives led by district personnel, and are often used as texts for college courses. These comprehensive resources use a common language and concept system that makes the **Common Core** come alive. Because they are cross-referenced, administrators, teacher leaders, veteran teachers, mentors, coaches, and new teachers can all be on the same page!

Call us at 800-940-5434 or go www.justaskpublications.com to request a catalog or a consulting services brochure or to subscribe to our free e-newsletters.

Celebrating Our Year!

Scavenger Hunt for Ten Great Ideas

This scavenger hunt was a part of the end-of-year celebrations held for new teachers in Alexandria City Public Schools, Virginia, and for new teachers in Greece Central School District, New York. In each district senior district leadership, mentors, and student musical groups joined in the celebration of the accomplishments of the new teachers in their first year in the district. The inclusion of the instructionally focused scavenger hunt helped to remind all participants of the primacy of student learning.

Directions:

As we gather to celebrate the completion of your first year of teaching, let's celebrate the ways you have impacted student learning. Find colleagues to respond to each of the ten statements. Have the colleague who provides information on an item sign your sheet and then you write a brief summary of what that person tells you. Of course, you provide them information on another item.

1. Find someone who has used several different ways to **check for student understanding** this year. Have him explain what he did, why he did it, and what the impact on learning was.
2. Find someone who can explain how she has integrated **literacy** across the curriculum.
3. Find someone who can name three **organizational systems** that she plans to put into place at the beginning of the next school year. Have her explain the systems and why she plans to use them.
4. Find someone to share a story of a **struggling student** who turned the corner. Have that person explain what happened and how he felt about it.
5. Find someone who can share a **parent communication system** that worked well and that she plans to use again next year. Get the details so you can use it too!
6. Find someone who can share a great **collegial relationship** that developed this year.
7. Find someone who used a new **active learning** strategy within the last month. Have her describe the activity and its impact on learning.
8. Find someone who can share three great ways to **put students into groups**.
9. Find someone who can tell you how she has successfully **integrated technology** as a learning tool for students.
10. Your own biggest accomplishment this year.



Celebrating Our Year

Scavenger Hunt for Ten Great Ideas!

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5. Find someone who can share a **parent communication system** that worked well and that she plans to use again next year. Get the details so you can use it too!
6. Find someone who can share a great **collegial relationship** that developed this year.



Messages for Next Year's New Teachers from Novice Teachers Finishing Their First Year

What fun! We have used this end-of-year exercise around the country with great success! True pearls of wisdom are expressed; additionally, patterns emerge so that when the suggestions are shared with the next year's new teachers, they can hear the messages loud and clear.

You can find a five-minute presentation of some of those words of wisdom on our **Points to Ponder CD-ROM**. This clip is a handy tool to use at opening of school induction programs. Have this year's novice teachers use the **Messages for New Teachers** tool on page 8 to record their ideas and then make your own CD-ROM.

An alternative stem to use with novice teachers as they complete their first year of teaching is to have them create **Messages for Mentors**. You can view representative statements set to music on our **Mentoring Resources** page at www.justaskpublications.com/just-ask-resource-center/mentoring-resources/

The picture below features an end-of-the-year celebration in Alexandria City Public Schools, Virginia, where the words of advice for both new teachers and mentors were printed on placards and placed on all the tables.



Messages for Next Year's New Teachers from Novice Teachers Finishing Their First Year

"If I could say one thing to next year's new teachers that would help make their year a success, I would say, . . ."

- You are a teacher. Now, remember what it was like to be young and trying to learn hard, new things every day, and you will be a good teacher. Use patience, a smile, and a sense of humor.
- Pick your battles and choose your projects wisely to make life easier.
- Don't be shy about asking for help.
- You've got the whole year ahead of you ~ pace yourself. If you don't ask, the answer is "no."
- Don't be afraid to ask questions if you are unclear about something. Also, don't be afraid to exhibit your own individual teaching styles and techniques. We should always be able to learn from each other.
- The first year is about survival in a new place. Try not to stress ~ focus on one day at a time.
- Talk to other teachers. Get to know teachers on your hallway. Finally, remember you are not alone when you have a problem in class or with a student.
- Relax. Take things as they come. Find out what needs to be done first and get that done. LAUGH!
- Organize a filing system and pick one day a week to file and organize all your papers.
- Be open to suggestions.
- Communicate with fellow teachers, administration, parents and departments often. Ask questions to clarify expectations and follow through on information given.
- It is going to be tough, but you can do it! When in doubt, ask lots of questions and don't give up. Have fun with your students and staff.
- Grade a couple of assignments daily. Papers can pile up before your eyes.
- Adopt a simple classroom organization system you can use on a consistent basis.
- Communicate with your instructional leader in the building.
- Sit down with your mentor at the beginning of each quarter to look at the school calendar. Then prioritize and schedule all of your duties and tasks. Enjoy the year!



- Ask questions! Ask questions! Ask questions!
- Stay on top of paperwork. It can get away from you. Ask questions of your mentor. That's what they are there for.
- Develop a relationship with someone who is positive and willing to offer advice, someone who has a few years experience and can give insight.
- Make one day out of your weekend a “school-free” day. Work expands to fill the space allowed.
- Make sure that you make the most of official and unofficial mentors. There are many people in this organization who are willing to assist you. All you have to do is ask.
- Take one day at a time. Believe in yourself that you are doing the best job you can. Take time for yourself!
- Never lose hope. Keep trying and you will reach there.
- Make sure to ask your mentors questions if you have them. There is so much new information thrown at you, it is hard to sort it all out at first. Everyone was very willing to help. You just have to ask.
- Be proactive and don't be afraid to ask questions and/or raise concerns.
- Find someone in your grade that can share ideas, resources, advice, etc. with you.
- Learn your needs: instructional, environmental, administrators' expectations, etc. Take the steps necessary to meet these needs and don't be afraid to ask. Many people are here to help. Help them help by asking.
- Don't be afraid to ask your mentor for help. That's what they are there for!
- Learn from your mistakes! Use all of your resources! Plan, plan, plan! Don't hesitate to ask for help!
- Ask, don't hesitate! The best resources are your fellow colleagues! Take notes. Use your agenda binder. There's too much information to remember.
- Don't be afraid to ask for help. Once you ask, then everyone will help.
- Set up a time to meet with your mentor each week. At the beginning of the year, go over the expectations for you and your mentor so that you know what to expect.
- Use your mentor as a sounding board for your concerns, questions, and even successes. They are there to help, listen, and support you. Make the effort even if they don't.
- Don't be afraid to ask questions and ask for help when you need it.
- Tell everyone “Hi” with a smile. Making a positive first impression on even teachers/administrators you do not work with helps people remember your face!
- Listen and learn from experienced teachers.



A Message for Next Year's New Teachers From a Novice Teacher Finishing the First Year

"If I could say one thing to next year's new teachers that would help make their year a success, I would say, . . ."



In My Mind's Eye...

Getting a Jump Start on the New Year!

Use the **In My Mind's Eye...** tool on page 11 with new teachers next fall; ask them to create a mental image of what they hope to accomplish this school year.

- Have new teachers record their thinking on the **In My Mind's Eye...** tool as the school year begins.
- Save their written reflections to return to them at the end of the school year and use them as the focus of celebration of what has been accomplished. For presentation at the end of the year celebration, roll them up and tie them with a red ribbon. Provide time for them to chat with one another about their successes in moving toward their ideal conditions.
- You can also use the statements as “ends in mind” to help the new teachers plan for the first weeks of school.
- Review the statements on a quarterly basis to facilitate quarterly goal setting.

The directions are:

Use this paper to describe what you hope to see and hear happening at the end of the school year.

- Picture you, your students, and the classroom learning environment in June of the upcoming school year.
- What would students know and be able to do as a result of having spent the school year with you?
- How will they be different?
- How will you be different?
- How would the classroom learning community be functioning?
- How will you measure your and their success?

In My Mind's Eye... Exemplars

By June I see my students self-motivated, inquisitive, and applying skills taught throughout the year to answer questions they may have. I see student-run book talks that deal not only with the basics of a book (i.e. theme, character, and setting) but also the underlying, complex issues in novels. I hear them linking material from the book to their own lives. In science, I see our 'thought box' full of questions from students concerning items related to the subject matter. In math, I see them working in groups to solve concrete, real life math problems with a number of possible solutions. I also hear thoughtful discussions that show students listening to each other.



Through the Voice of New Teachers In My Mind's Eye...Exemplars

- The classroom environment is orderly but relaxed. They are respectful of me and each other. They know each others' names. They work easily in groups and stay on-task even if I am not in their near vicinity. They know the day's objective and are used to the format of essential questions guiding classroom learning. They have a clear understanding of much of world history; it 'hangs together' for them, and is integrated by not only the overarching essential questions but also by the common thread of art and literature that people of all time periods have created. They are familiar with the state assessment and its format. They are confident they can pass, but also knowing it is not a complete assessment of what they have learned in my class.
- My goal is to establish a cooperative learning environment where students work together to learn the basic building blocks of a second language. I want the students to be comfortable with experimentation and practice because the goal is to teach them communicative skills. I also hope to give them an appreciation of other cultures since many are at a point in their development when being different is perceived as undesirable.
- Come June, my goal is to be graduating a class of 22 kindergarten students who can read and write above grade level. The students will be cooperative and understand routines of the classroom. I will be a completely different person who will most likely be heartbroken that my first class is moving on. My success in this first year will be measured through the reading of the students, as well as their writing ability. I see our classroom as a place with a safe environment for risk taking.
- At the end of the school year, I hope to be proud of my accomplishments as a first year teacher as well as my students being proud of me. This pride will come from the success of my students throughout the year in academics and their personal lives inside and outside of school. The difference in my students and me in June will be our confidence in ourselves and one another. They will be confident in their understanding of the material because they have become confident in my teaching, and I will be confident in them and myself. I will measure my own and their success in June based on whether the learning environment is one that enables us all to succeed in the last few weeks of school in our Regents Math class.

These **Through the Voice Of New Teachers** exemplars are reprinted from *The 21st Century Mentor's Handbook*.



In My Mind's Eye...

Picture you, your students, and the classroom learning environment in June of the upcoming school year.

- **What would students know and be able to do as a result of having spent the school year with you?**
- **How will they be different?**
- **How will you be different?**
- **How would the classroom learning community be functioning?**
- **How will you measure your and their success?**

Use this paper to describe what you hope to see and hear happening at the end of the school year.



That's True About Me!

Shown below is an example of how to use the active engagement strategy **That's True About Me!** as part of an end-of-year celebration.

- Prepare a set of stems that are likely to represent multiple members of the group of new teachers in attendance.
- As you read the stem, ask those the stem represents to raise their hands and shout, "That's True About Me!"
- It always elicits head nodding, groans, smiles, and sometimes, even belly laughs!

Anne Arundel, Maryland's New Teacher Celebration That's True About Me!

- I was born in Maryland.
- Anne Arundel County Public Schools is the first district in which I have taught.
- I have a relative who is or was a teacher.
- I came into teaching from another career path.
- I never got in trouble for talking in school.
- I always got in trouble for talking in school.
- I speak more than one language.
- I have students in my class who have a language other than English as their first language.
- I have never gotten a speeding ticket. (Have them keep their hands up for the next question while you read the next stem.)
- I have never driven over the speed limit.
- Whenever I asked a question about policies and procedures, I always got the same answer from everyone I asked.
- I have been known to give "the teacher look" to children misbehaving at the movie theatre or mall or to adults with more than 15 items in the express lane at the grocery store.
- There were times this year when I felt like I would drown in paperwork.
- All of my students did all of their homework this year.
- I turned every single required school report in on time this year.
- I now understand that secretaries and custodians run the school.
- I often find myself wearing rubber bands or a roll of masking tape as a bracelet.
- I think a great vacation is chilling out by the pool or on the beach.
- I think a great vacation is hiking or riding the rapids.
- I really, really try to keep student learning as my goal but have been known to slip into thinking that my short term goal is Friday and my long term goal is June.



That's True About Me!

- I never once said a disparaging remark about parenting skills this year. Oops!
- I am a parent.
- I have or have had a parent.
- Therefore, I think parents are good people.
- I spent absolutely NO personal money on teaching supplies.
- I was one of the lucky ones who taught in multiple classrooms or schools... the traveling teacher.
- I can remember my first grade teacher's name. (Pause for processing and ask participants to tell a neighbor what they remember about that teacher.)
- I taught first grade this year.
- I am a reading teacher.
- Let's try that again... I am a reading teacher
- Once more with feeling...I teach reading!
- My students can tell you the number of days (hours) until school is out for summer.
- I, too, can tell you the number of days until school is out for summer.
- I am sleep deprived.
- I could write a book about what I will do differently next year.
- My students learned a lot this year!
- I have learned a lot this year!
- In fact, I can name one student who taught me more than I taught him or her. (Pause for processing and have participants describe that student and what was learned.)
- The bottom line is, I made a difference!

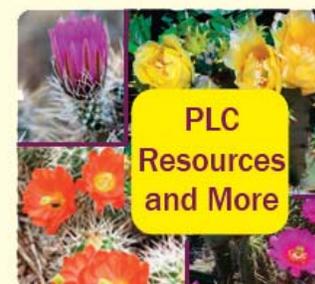
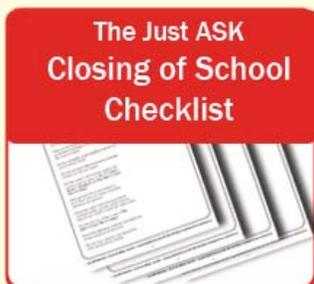
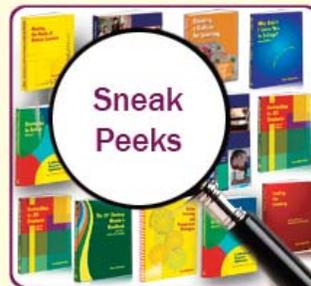
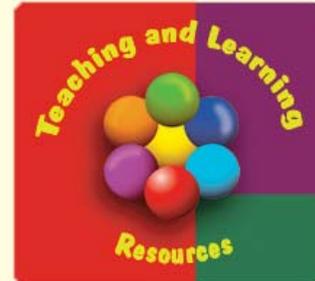
See pages 25-28 in ***Why Didn't I Learn This in College?*** for “Getting to Know You” strategies outlined there that can be used in classrooms and adapted for use as engaging and humorous ways to celebrate the end of the school year.



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