

## **Ways to Close the Year with Middle Level Students**

### **Ways to Reflect**

#### **Peaks and Valleys**

Individually or with partners, students draw a mountainscape to represent things that have gone well (peaks) and things that did not go well (valleys). There can also be plateaus, outcroppings, and other features to represent events or aspects of the year. Students should consider projects, homework, friendships, out-of-school successes, new knowledge gained, frustrations, etc.

#### **Hopes and Dreams Review**

If you began the year with students sharing their hopes and dreams, have them reflect in writing or visually on their progress toward them. They can share their reflection with at least one other student: Did you reach your hope? Why or why not? What were the barriers? How did you overcome barriers? What might you change for next year? You can save them and hand them out at the beginning of the new year as examples to help others formulate new hopes and dreams.

#### **School Year Highlights**

Brainstorm as many highlights of the year the class can think of: projects, field trips, programs, guest speakers, important tests, all-school events, etc. After choosing an event, pairs or small groups of students create representations of it. Examples of ways to present them are a soap opera, a newscast, a poster, a poem or dramatic reading, a song, etc. You could record it and/or make a video.

#### **Write a Memo**

Students write memos to themselves for the next school year, sharing advice and wisdom learned this year. Have them reflect on what they learned about themselves academically, socially, and physically. Hand out envelopes for them to put their memos in, seal, and address, then leave with you. Send them out two weeks before the next school year starts.

### **Ways to Acknowledge**

#### **Snowball**

Materials: paper, pencils

Students write their names on a piece of paper and crumple it into a snowball. At a signal, they toss them into the middle of the circle. Each student then picks one up and writes an acknowledgement to the person whose name is on the paper. At a signal, everyone gives the “snowball” back to the original owner. This can continue for several rounds.

### **Acknowledgment Buffet**

Materials: paper plates

Give each student a paper plate and have him or her write his or her name in the middle. S/he then exchanges the plate with another person and writes an acknowledgement on the person's plate. Exchange and acknowledge as many times as time permits. Finally, each plate is returned to its owner.

### **Exquisite Corpse**

Materials: paper, pencils

This idea is based on a form of group poetry used in France in the early 1920's. A student folds over the header of a page and puts his name on top and passes it to another, who writes an acknowledgment of that person. Then s/he folds his/her writing over so it doesn't show, so all that is visible is the person's name, and hands it to someone else. The process continues for several rounds. The paper ends up with the originator. Those who wish may share their acknowledgment "poems" with a partner or with the group.

## **Ways to Dream**

### **News on the Fives**

Students draw and/or write where they will be five, ten, and 15 years from now. What hobbies might they have? What do they hope will be their major accomplishments? Where might they live? What might they do to earn a living? Who will have been their greatest influence?

### **The Interview**

Students generate a list of questions they want to ask their classmates. They pair up and interview each other with the questions they chose. Students then can present the interviews to the class in writing or orally.

### **Dear Parent/Guardian**

Students write to their parent/guardian imagining their future and what they might become. Have them thank their parent/guardian for helping them to reach their goals.

### **Wear Sunscreen**

A column appeared in the Chicago Tribune on June 1, 1997, headlined "ADVICE, LIKE YOUTH, PROBABLY JUST WASTED ON THE YOUNG", offering advice to young people. It was made into the *Sunscreen Song*. See the lyrics at:

<http://www.anysonglyrics.com/lyrics/b/bazluhrmann/everybodys.htm>. Use the same concept to have students write to a younger grade and advise them of what it takes to be successful in school. Give them the *How to be a success in middle school: academically, socially, personally* worksheet below, then have each student create a rap, song, poem, or drawing based on what they wrote.

# How to be a success in middle school academically, socially, and personally

Judge your success by \_\_\_\_\_

Take time to \_\_\_\_\_

Improve your grades by \_\_\_\_\_

If you want to make friends, \_\_\_\_\_

Remember \_\_\_\_\_

Always \_\_\_\_\_

Say \_\_\_\_\_

Be grateful for \_\_\_\_\_

Constantly \_\_\_\_\_

If you want to keep friends, \_\_\_\_\_

Teachers appreciate \_\_\_\_\_

Stay out of trouble by \_\_\_\_\_

Keep peace with parents by \_\_\_\_\_

What is your favorite quote? Why?

What is the secret to your happiness?

What is the one thing that matters most to you? Why?