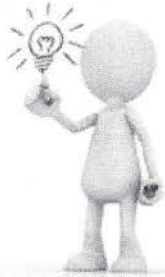


## 12 Ways to Keep Kids Motivated at the End of the School Year

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Keeping kids motivated and on task at the end of the year is challenging at best, especially after state tests are over. In fact, the more we prep kids for tests, the harder it is to keep kids on task after testing ends. Yet keeping kids motivated at this time of year is actually much easier than you might think. Since kids are more chatty and restless at this time of year, it's just a matter of funneling that energy into something constructive.

Here are 12 effective strategies to turn students' end-of-the-year energy into instructional success.

Each of the twelve suggestions below is meant to spark your creativity rather than to provide detailed instructions. If you're not already familiar with the strategy, you may need to do a little more research before you begin. To save you time, I've included links to helpful online resources from my website and around the web.

### Learning Centers

One of the easiest ways to keep kids on task is to create some simple learning centers and allow students to rotate through the activities with a partner. If you haven't used learning centers before, you might be surprised at how easy they are to implement. Here are some additional ideas and strategies on my learning center page.

### Literature Circles

If your students are bored by reading a basal text or doing test prep worksheets, they will definitely enjoy Literature Circles. The easiest way to get started is with Classroom Book Clubs, a relaxed and fun method that's perfect for the end of the year. You can find loads of Literature Circles strategies on my website.



### Class Scrapbooks

Creating a class scrapbook is a terrific way to wrap up the school year. Let each student design his or her own special page. The front of the page can include their name, a photo, illustrations, and other personal touches. Have each student write you a letter about the school year and glue it onto the back of his or her page. Add a student-created cover, laminate all pages, and bind the finished product with plastic comb binding.

### Cooperative Learning

Cooperative learning activities are naturally motivating to students. Being able to discuss ideas and interact with other students is a sure-fire strategy for keeping kids involved. The key is to establish clear guidelines for classroom management so the fun doesn't become chaotic.

### Read Aloud Marathons

There never seems to be enough time to read aloud during the school year, so it's wonderful to have more freedom to do so after the pressures of testing are over. Instead of reading just 10 minutes a day, I enjoy spending 30 minutes or more sharing great books with my kids. I recently asked teachers on Facebook to share their favorite read-alouds for the last month of school, and over 50 people responded. Read the complete list and add your own suggestions.

## Class Newsletters

Involve the whole class in this meaningful writing activity, and everyone will end up with a treasured record of your school year. Start by brainstorming all the special events that have occurred throughout the year, and then ask each student to write about one of the events. Select a few students to serve as editors who compile all of the stories into one newspaper. Add digital photos, scanned artwork, quotes about the school year, awards and accomplishments – the list is endless! To conserve paper, produce the newsletter in digital form and email it to parents. Be sure to print one or two copies for students to share in the classroom.

## Fun Friday

A weekly incentive can work wonders to keep kids on task at the end of the year. Try to involve at least three teachers on your grade level in this weekly activity. Set aside a 30-minute block of time on Friday for "Fun Friday." Each teacher signs up to host a different activity: Inside Games, Outside Play, or Study Hall.

In order to participate in Fun Friday, students must complete all homework and other assignments for the week. Those who don't do their work spend the time in Study Hall, while the others can choose between Outside Play and Inside Games. You can find a [Fun Friday sign-up sheet](#) to use with this activity on my [Odds N Ends page](#).



## Scrabble Tournaments

What could be more fun than a board game tournament that's educational as well as exciting? Many families have Scrabble boards in their closets that they can lend to your class, and setting up a tournament is easy. You can find complete [Scrabble Tournament directions and printables for the event](#) on my [Odds N Ends page](#).

## Outside Learning

When the weather turns warm and sunny, everyone longs to be outside. Many activities like reading, writing poetry, doing science experiments, or playing math games can be taken outside. Ask students to bring beach blankets or towels for these special times. Even a few minutes spent outside for a read-aloud session can offer a quick cure for the end-of-the-year blues.

## Team Challenges

From Egg Drop Challenges to Tower Building, team challenges motivate students to think creatively and work together in order to solve a task. You can find many such activities that integrate math and science at the [AIMS Education Foundation website](#). One of my favorites is to have kids create Puff Mobiles from straws, large wooden beads, and paper. Go to their website at <http://www.aimsedu.org> and search for the Puff Mobiles activity.

You can also find these types of activities at the [NC Science Olympiad website](#).

## Ed Tech & Online Learning Games

I'm amazed at the number of free and inexpensive online learning games available. If you have a computer in your classroom, you have access to all sorts of online games such as the skill races at [Arcademic Skill Builders](#) or the stories read aloud on [StoryLine Online](#). I've also begun to research iPad and iPod apps for kids, and I'm excited at what's already available.

Take a look at the 11-page alphabetical list of educational apps compiled by a group of teachers in North Carolina. You can also check out [20 Amazing iPad Apps for Educators](#) or [Online Learning Games Kids Love](#).



## Multimedia Projects

Challenge your students to work alone or in teams to create multi-media presentations. Possible topics include anything from a recap of the school year to their dreams for the future. If you think "multi-media" means PowerPoint, think again. Check out [Prezi](#), [Animoto](#), and [Slideshare](#) for some exciting alternatives.

With these strategies, learning is still the name of the game, but the learning goes far beyond tested skills. Your students will discover hidden talents and have fun doing so. Furthermore, the end of the year will become a time to celebrate, a time to share great memories of special times together.

How do you keep kids motivated at the end of the school year? Share in the comments section!