

VOICES OF EXPERIENCE

Practical Ideas to
Wrap Up the Year

Grades K-3

COLLEEN POLITANO • JOY PAQUIN
CAREN CAMERON • KATHLEEN GREGORY



Introduction

Who is this series for?

Voices of Experience is a series of six books – three for grades K-3, three for grades 4-8. Each book is full of practical ideas designed for new teachers, teachers new to a grade level, and teachers who want new ideas to reenergize their practice.

What's in the books?

We have compiled our best ideas and organized them into two sets of three books:

- Book 1: for the start of the year when teachers are just getting to know their students
- Book 2: for during the year when teachers need to get themselves and their students “fired up”
- Book 3: for the end of the year when teachers need to wrap things up

Each book is organized into four sections around the acronym ROAR.

R = ideas for building relationships

O = ideas for classroom organization

A = ideas for classroom assessment that support student learning

R = ideas that are reliable and ready to use tomorrow

“Create a new model of teacher-teacher support so that every teacher knows every other teacher’s best ideas.”

— Eric Jensen,
Brain-Based Learning

For each idea we provide a brief discussion and easy-to-follow steps. Many also include student examples and unique adaptations. In addition, we have included current information about the brain and how students learn.

We have also included a variety of ways to use this series of books to support professional development activities in different settings; for example, educators' book clubs; team and department meetings and staff meetings; in-service and pre-service workshops; and seminars with student teachers (see appendix A).

Final Note:

The single, most important message we want to leave you with is to listen to your own voice and the voices of your students. Adapt our ideas to fit for you, your students, and your school community.

Can-Do Cards:

making cards to remind students of their strengths

Everyone in the world succeeds best in life when he understands his specific strengths.

— Mel Levine,
The Myth of Laziness

DISCUSSION

Help students recognize the learning they've done over the school year. One concrete way we do this is to have our students identify their own strengths and make a set of "can-do cards." We find this personal record of accomplishment helps students build confidence in themselves as learners.

STEPS

1. Talk with students about how important it is for everyone to know his or her own strengths. We say, "You are going to make a set of cards to show yourself and others some of the things you have learned to do this year in school. When you know what you're good at, it's easier to learn."
2. Record on chart paper a list of skills students "can do." Read the list to students and have them suggest other skills to add (see figure 28).
3. Invite a student volunteer to demonstrate how to make a "can-do card." We ask the

Our "can-do" list

I can spell hard words

I can make a pattern

I can add

I can subtract

I can write a poem

I can be a friend

I can play hockey in the gym

I can count to _____

I can read books

I can proofread my work

I can be an artist

I can sing

Figure 28. List of things students "can do"

volunteer to select a skill from the list on the chart paper, record it on the card, and write or draw examples to illustrate how they “can do” the skill. We remind students that everyone is unique and that each person will choose their own examples to show how they can do the skill (see figure 29).

4. Make a copy of the black line master on page 58 for each student to complete. We give students several opportunities to work on their “can-do cards” during the last month of school.
5. Give students opportunities to share their “can-do cards” with their peers.
6. Find a way to have each student keep his/her “can-do cards” together. We give our students rings to hold their cards together so they can take them home at the end of the year.

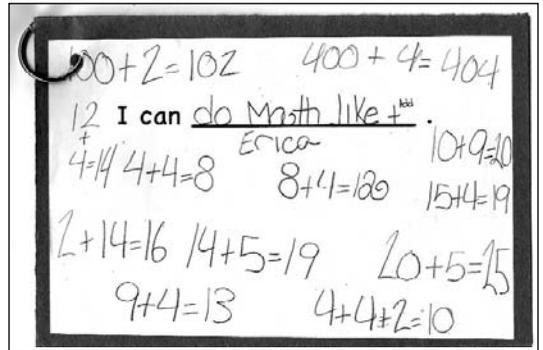


Figure 29. Student's example of a “can-do” card



Figure 30. A student writes examples to show she “can do” the skill.

I can

Name _____

I can

Name _____

I can

Name _____

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Figure 29. (page 29)