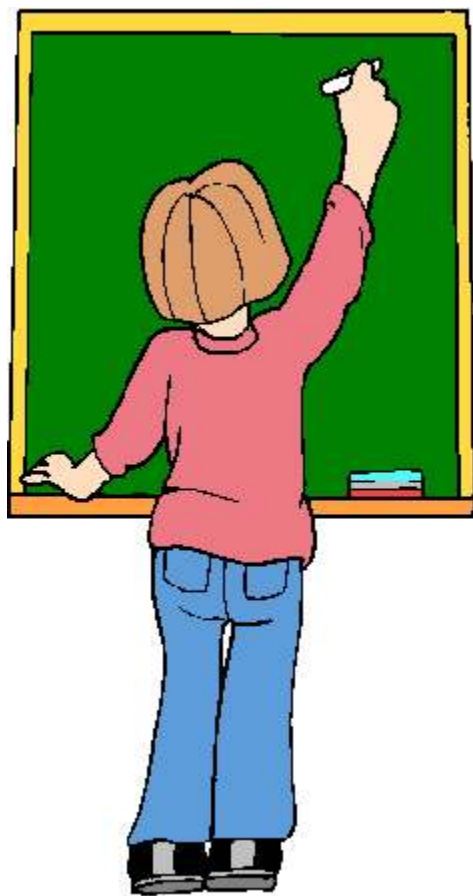


Ten Top Tips For Teachers



Ideas for Assembly

A Fishy Music Production

Ten Top Tips For Teachers

To help make your assemblies go with a swing, why not try some of these Top Tips from Fishy Music:

1. Time for Teams

Form Assembly Teams. If your school or department has an assembly rota where each teacher has to take a turn (and agonise about it for days before), suggest forming Assembly Teams. Rather than be faced with taking all the roles for your assembly (reader, MC, musician, technician, artist, crowd control), form teams of about 4, discover each other's strengths and allocate regular roles. It will be more efficient (and less stressful) to use your strengths or develop new ones with regular practice than spend hours making a PowerPoint a few times a term or going to the library to source music for just one assembly. This also avoids unhealthy rivalry and comparisons.

2. Pull up your PowerPoint

Use PowerPoint for your assemblies. Set up a template PowerPoint file called Our Assembly and build up a collection of standard slides (an assembly title slide, pictures of each of the class groups, school logo, picture of a cake for children's birthdays, words for songs or prayers). You will soon accumulate a library of slides that will make preparation much quicker and even allow you to make last minute changes. Just right-click on a slide and choose hide slide to skip it for the current assembly.

The PowerPoint slides will also act as a useful prompt for the MC.

3. Hall Change

Set up the hall in an interesting way. Using a screen or whiteboard with PowerPoint will help provide a focus and give something for the children to look at when they come in. Consider having a central point such as a table with a special cloth, flowers, candle and maybe a prop which gives a clue to the assembly theme. Varying or reducing the lighting can also make a surprising difference to the atmosphere and as in theatres and cinemas, create a sense of expectation.

4. Pupil Power

Give children responsibilities. When you have set up the hall as you want it (chairs, mats, table, projector etc), take a picture of it and appoint a group of children to recreate the setting for future assemblies. This could initially be done under the supervision of a staff member and then faded out.

5. Stirring Starts

Use a Theme Song. Select one piece of music as an assembly theme song. You could use it to signal the start or for children to leave by or both.

(TIP: Fishy Music have produced a lively instrumental just for this purpose called Hall March. Visit www.fishymusic.co.uk)

Also set some different music playing before the children start to arrive as this will add ambience and an air of expectation as the early children come in.

6. Band Aid

Form a small staff band. Find out who on the staff can play an instrument (even just two staff would be a duo!) A recorder or some percussion, even if very simple, will add visual interest and may inspire more able children to take part regularly. Alternatively if several staff have some very rudimentary keyboard skills, why not use 2 or 3 keyboards simultaneously, with one or two playing one finger melodies on different instrument settings. This may require a little practice at first but occasional lunchtime practices can build a great sense of camaraderie among staff and be fun too.

You could also try four hands on the piano: have one teacher play the melody lines in octaves on the piano and another teacher vamp the chord accompaniment or play the chords on a guitar. Most children's songs are based on just a few simple chords.

7. Say it with Signs

Sign key words of your message. Consider having a member of staff stand at the front and sign key words, using Makaton or British Sign Language. This will help children concentrate as they will be seeing the message as well as hearing it. Perhaps everyone could learn one or two signs each week as part of an inclusion programme for children who are hearing impaired.

8. Sketching Skills

Sketch key ideas in real time. Set up a flipchart at the front and find a member of staff who is "quick on the draw". Have them draw cartoons or stick men while the MC is speaking to represent something they are saying. The fact that visual information will grow slowly in front of the children will help hold their attention on what is being said.

If you are using PowerPoint as well, a sudden change of medium like this will add to its impact.

9. Go for Gold

Have a 'Gold Award' presentation for behaviour. In addition to having a spot for birthdays or welcoming new children, present an award for behaviour rather than ability (for instance the child who has been the most helpful this week or shown an act of kindness to someone)

10. Enjoy it!

Talk about your hobbies or things you like, tell jokes, use different voices, communicate some fun. If you appear to be having a good time, the children will begin to look forward to assembly.

Enthusiasm is infectious - let your children catch something from you!

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