

I've never been fully satisfied with the various ways I've ended my school year. Too many times, after an amazing year of incredible experiences and powerful relationships, it just seems...anti-climactic. I hate it. It has always bothered me. The bell rings, they walk out, and many times I've felt that I missed an opportunity to do something with real impact. I think about how carefully I've crafted the last moment in my speaking programs and I know all of that effort has been worth it when I see the reaction. I want your last moment with your students to be powerful, too.

I wanted to share an awesome example of how one amazing teacher and great friend of mine, John Berray, has solved the problem in his class. John has graciously given me permission to tweak and re-post a blog he wrote about the lesson a couple of years ago.

John is an incredible math teacher at West Hills High School here in San Diego and, more importantly, a teacher who has embraced the mighty purpose of educators being life-changers. He is a popular workshop presenter, winner of numerous awards, and was honored as one of the 2015 San Diego County Teachers of the Year.

Thanks, John!

You can read his idea on my blog by clicking the link right below...or I've copied the text into the email if that is easier for you.

<http://www.daveburgess.com/new/how-will-you-end-your-year/>

Bottle of Dreams

Every once in a while I create an experience for my students that is cool and its impact even surprises me. My "Farewell Address" is one such activity. Several years back, I decided to define an end-of-the-year moment of closure with each class. I wanted a time to celebrate our year together, to reminisce, and to toast the wide-open futures of each student in the room. I wanted more than the perfunctory collecting of books, doling out of grades, and ticking down of the clock that seems to define intervals of learning.

Here's how it works.

I advertise my farewell address as a "do not miss" moment. I commandeer the last part of class. I bring in bottles of water, one for each student. I tell each student to grab a bottle and crack the lid but not to open it. Many guess that a toast is coming... and they're right!

I embellish the farewell address with thoughts and advice and conclude it with challenges and requests. I recognize there's a good probability this might be the last time we ever speak, so it needs to be meaningful. The moment is bittersweet. Each year I make small tweaks to how I do it, what I say, and what I request. Some years even make me tear up. Last year was one of them.

The students are aware that the toast is really only a sip of bottled water, but for some, I transform their vision of it from just being ordinary water into being a "Bottle of Dreams." Most think it's funny, but buy into it anyway. They can look at the water for what it is, or they can visualize it being whatever they want it to be. It's about belief. It's about the power of their minds to pretend for the sake of silliness that it's a potent non-alcoholic elixir that marks not just the end of the school year, but also new beginnings. The moment is simultaneously deep and light-hearted. I ask them to keep it as a reminder of the farewell address.

During this year's graduation procession, as students were leaving the field, I had several of them tell me that they still had their bottle of dreams. Students saved an empty water bottle for years because of the meaning we attached to it! How cool is that? My farewell address has become one of my classroom traditions and has allowed me to find a way to end my year-long relationship with my students in a powerful and meaningful way.

Thanks for sharing, John!!

Connect with John on Twitter at @JohnBerray and you can follow his blog right here:
<https://johnberray.wordpress.com>

So...what do you think? How will you end your school year in a way that is worthy of the significance of the moment? We

would love to hear your thoughts in the blog comments or shoot us a tweet to @burgessdave and @JohnBerray. Throw in the hashtag #tlap so the whole community can see it!

Dave

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