

It's May and I'm Thinking About August

When I was in the classroom, each year in May I thought about the school year that was ending. I made a list. What went well? What did I wish I had done differently? What did I want to know more about? Which students surprised me with their success? Which students surprised me with their lack of success? Pausing to do this taught me so much, and I think you'd reap the benefits from doing this too! Now's the time.

It's much easier to make the list now while the memory of this year is still fresh rather than when you're in the midst of the busy-ness of the start to school next year. Why would you *write* it and not just *think* it? A list will help you solidify your thinking. You probably won't write something impractical on the list, but you might think it.

Both new and veteran teachers can use this kind of list. When I was a new teacher, my list focused on classroom management. I wrote things like "get class started more quickly" or "do warmups every day." As I gained more experience, my list took an instructional focus. "Work more in groups" and "Do PBL."



I never accomplished everything on the list. In fact, warmups are on EVERY list that I still have. But writing the lists made a difference for me. It could make a difference for you, too. Here are some ways you might use your list:

- Tape it to your computer or somewhere you'll see it every day. With ready access, you can mark things off when you don't need them on a list anymore. You can add to the list as the year goes on. The list will be right in front of you, so you won't forget it.
- Use this list as a brainstorm to set SMART goals for next year.
- Just because you want to do something better doesn't mean you know how. Use the list to create a PD plan for yourself.
- If you are an instructional coach or leader, make a list of PLC topics for next year based on this year's needs. Click [here](#) for more info about how to organize your steps.

We've provided a brainstorming sheet [Thinking About Next Year](#) to get your thinking started. Here's how we were thinking you'd use it.

- ✓ List this year's successes. They can be modest successes or big ones. Recognize what you did well!
- List things that are still going around in your head. What confused you this year? What are the thoughts that keep swirling?
- ★ List topics you want to research, such as building fact fluency or guided math. These should be bigger topics that aren't easily solved by a simple internet search.
- ▲ List things that you can control that didn't go so well. Don't put things where the sentence might start "Parents should..." because you can't control that.
- ☪ Cull your ideas down to a few bulleted items and write them in the My Plan for Next Year box.

Be sure to keep your lists from year to year. As the years go on, it's fun to look back at the lists and see how much you've grown as a teacher. Happy planning!