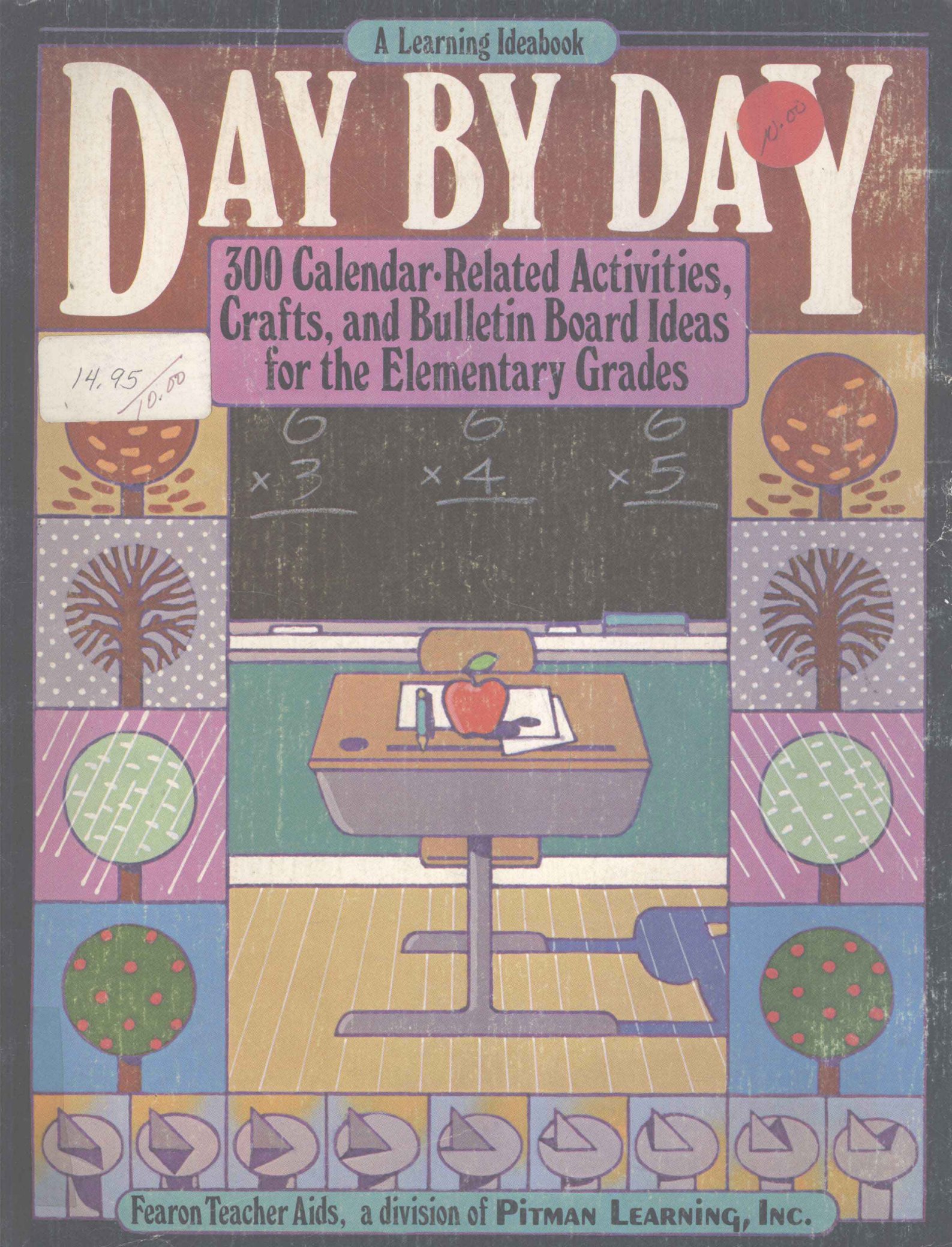
A Learning Ideabook

DAY BY DAY

300 Calendar-Related Activities, Crafts, and Bulletin Board Ideas for the Elementary Grades



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FOREWORD

DAY BY DAY is an anthology of 300 seasonal and calendar-related ideas and activities for the school year. Unlike other calendar activity books, *Day by Day* successfully integrates basic curricular topics with many significant calendar events and occasions. The activities in this book are either entirely new or creative innovations on old favorites. Many are based on ideas contributed by readers of *Learning Magazine*. Together they span the areas of reading, language arts, social studies, science, math, physical education, and art.

Day by Day has eleven chapters, one for each month of the school year and one for year-long learning ideas. Chapters Two through Eleven (September through June) open with calendars that include historical anniversaries, civic holidays, famous birthdays, commemorative days, and some religious festivals — an entry for almost every day of the month. The first chapter, Ideas for the Year, features a calendar of school months. Entries in this calendar are "floating" holidays, such as Easter, which derive from other lunar or lunisolar calendars; week- and month-long observances, such as Afro-American History Month; and holidays which are legally proclaimed for a day in a particular week, such as Labor Day.

The calendars are always followed by 20 or more activities, two or three large craft projects, at least two bulletin board ideas, and a list of resources for the teacher and students. *Day by Day* also features a section of MAKEMASTER duplicatable worksheets — one each for the primary and intermediate levels for every month. Together the MAKEMASTER worksheets comprise a souvenir scrapbook, complete with cover, that kids can assemble and take home at the end of the year. And we haven't forgotten you! Teachers' Planners and a subject-area Index have been included for your convenience and quick reference.

Teachers of the primary and intermediate grades will get the most benefit of the material, although middle school teachers may find ideas for their students that are appropriate and easy to adapt. All teachers will find *Day by Day* to have a format that is flexible rather than prescriptive, allowing them to select activities that suit their particular needs. Above all, teachers will find *Day by Day* enjoyable to read as well as comprehensive, informative, and easy to use.

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DAY BY DAY

300

CALENDAR-RELATED ACTIVITIES, CRAFTS, AND BULLETIN BOARD IDEAS FOR THE ELEMENTARY GRADES

EDITED BY

BONNIE BERNSTEIN

PITMAN LEARNING, INC.

CHAPTER

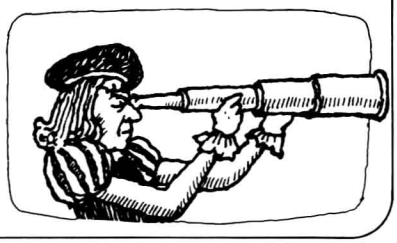
IDEAS FOR

September

Labor Day — first Monday
National Grandparents' Day — first Sunday after Labor Day
Autumnal Equinox — the first day of autumn (astronomical)
National Good Neighbor Day — fourth Sunday
Native American Day — fourth Friday

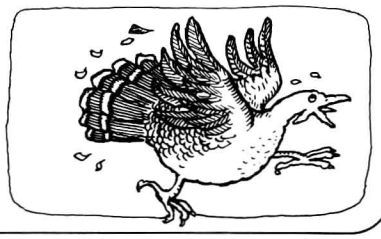
October

Fire Prevention Week — the week including October 8
(the anniversary of the Chicago Fire in 1871)
Columbus Day — second Monday (legal observance)
National Jogging Day — second Saturday
Standard Time — last Sunday



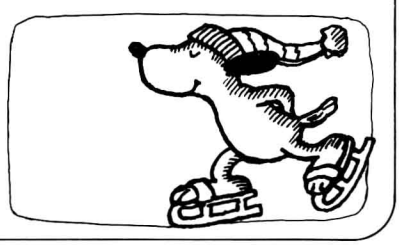
November

Election Day — first Tuesday after the first Monday
American Education Week — second full week
National Children's Book Week — second full week
Thanksgiving — usually the fourth Thursday



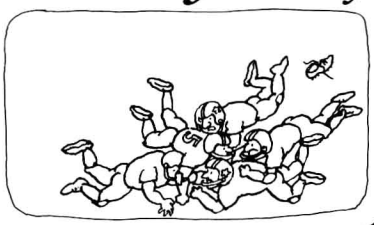
December

Hanukkah — derived from the Hebrew calendar
Winter Solstice — first day of winter (astronomical)



January

Read a New Book Month
Presidential Inauguration Day — on January 20 every 4 years
Super Bowl Sunday — third Sunday



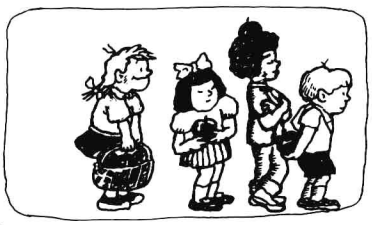
ONE

THE YEAR

February

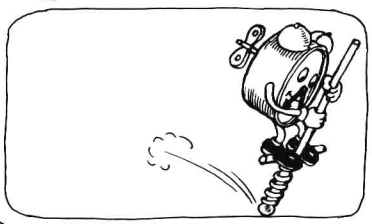
Afro-American History Month
National Children's Dental Health Week — first full week
Chinese New Year — derived from the lunar calendar
Presidents' Day — third Monday
Leap Year Day — on February 29, once every 4 years

March



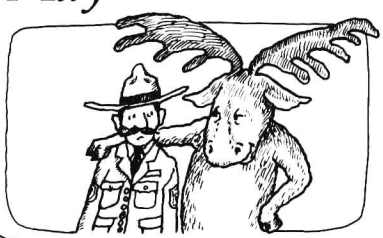
Youth Art Month
National Nutrition Month
Earth Day, the Vernal Equinox — the first day of spring (astronomical)
National Wildlife Week — the third full week

April



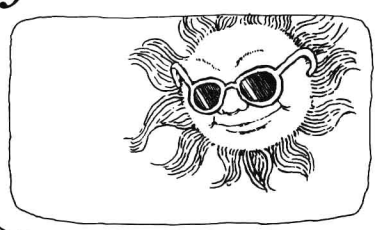
Passover — derived from the Hebrew calendar
Easter — derived from the lunar calendar
Patriot's Day — third Monday
National Arbor Day — third Friday
Daylight Savings Time — last Sunday

May



American Bike Month
Senior Citizens Month
Be Kind to Animals Week — first full week
Mother's Day — second Sunday
Teacher's Day — Thursday before Memorial Day
Memorial Day — last Monday (legal observance)

June



Children's Day — second Sunday
Father's Day — third Sunday
Flag Week — week including Flag Day, June 14
End of School — usually the third week
Summer Solstice — the first day of summer (astronomical)

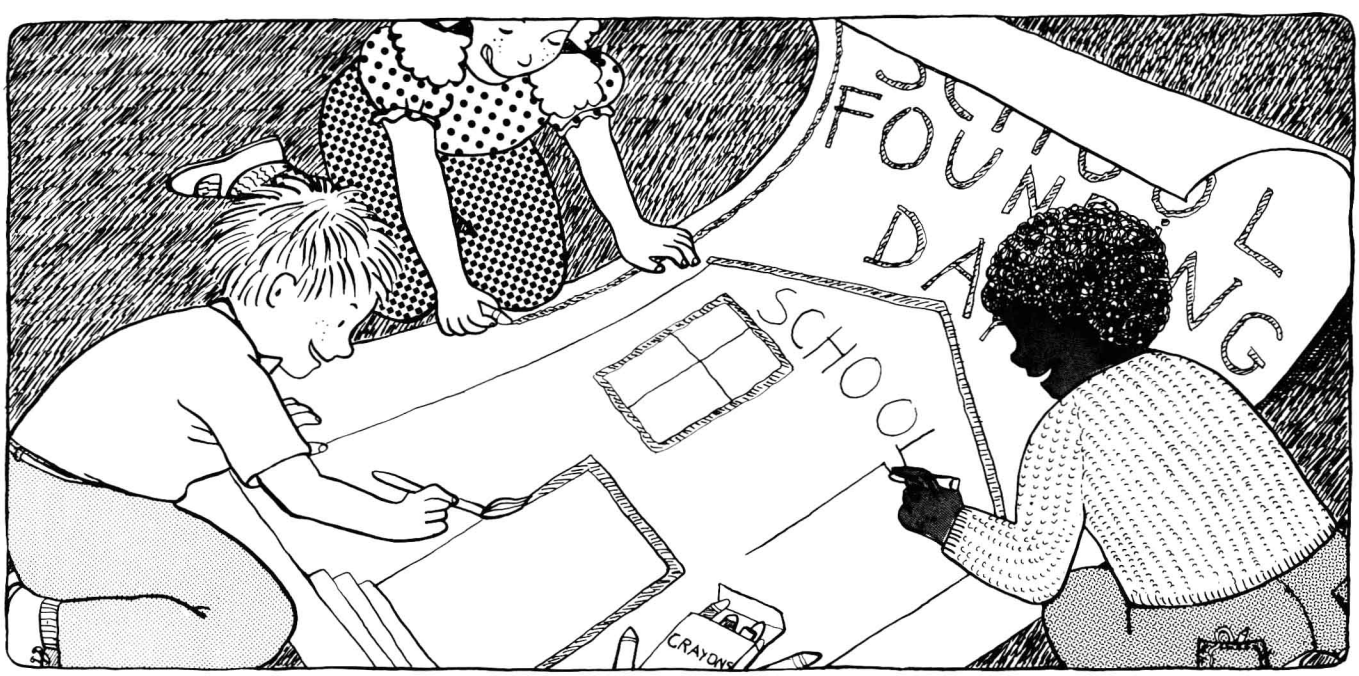
No. 1

SCHOOL-YEAR CALENDAR PROJECTS

Every day is historically noteworthy. If tomorrow isn't a national or religious holiday or the beginning of a week of events, then it may be somebody's birthday or the day a record was set for a special accomplishment.

The *Day by Day* monthly calendars supply you with a happening for just about every day of the school year. You might like to use the calendar entries as part of an ongoing learning program or simply for their anecdotal value. The calendar will inspire many uses, but here are some learning ideas to help you get started:

- Have the class decide upon a date to celebrate. It can be a made-up event or a not-too-important date on the calendar—perhaps a week during which everyone plans to get homework completed on time or a celebration of the school's founding. Create posters to promote the day; hold an assembly with the day as the theme; travel from class to class with an interest-generating presentation; draw up a full plan for the celebration.
- Many holidays have traditions surrounding them. Ask students to pick an unfamiliar national or religious holiday and learn about the symbols and traditions that go with it. Often libraries have a section of books that describe the various holidays.
- Relate the calendar to a study of careers. What kind of work is represented by an entry (an invention, for example)? What kinds of training or background must have been necessary for the individual(s) involved?
- Students can make up a trivia calendar by finding the least significant events for each day and inserting them on a homemade calendar. For a selection of such dates, the *Guinness Book of World Records* (see resource list) will be a good place to start. Another worthwhile source is the daily newspaper, especially the short filler articles.
- Many of the important events in history relate to improvements in transportation. Have students find entries about transportation on the calendar. Ask them to use books to learn about other inventions or breakthroughs in transportation. Which of the improvements are out of date today? Which were im-



proved further? Which never worked?

• The acronym "TGIF" stands for "Thank God It's Friday." Other days of the week have earned special sayings too: "Blue Monday," "Over the Hump Day" (Wednesday), and so on. Have kids make up expressions or create drawings for each day of the week, giving meaning according to how the day usually makes them feel.

• Cycles are part of every year. The amount of daylight varies by season; the moon goes through phases each month; the year itself is a cycle. Have kids research these and other natural cycles and explain them with models and illustrations to their classmates.

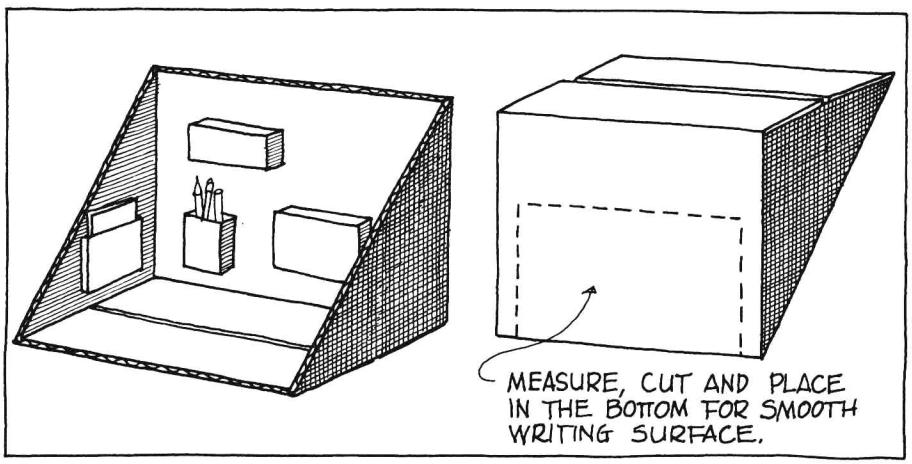
• Today the Gregorian calendar is the most familiar dating format. But this hasn't always been the case. Understanding the bases and history of other calendars will make an interesting student research project.

• The signs of the zodiac, named for constellations, are another way of organizing the year. Assign students the task of finding out the signs and their names, the date each one begins and ends and, for older groups, the historical basis of the calendar.

• In this time of conversion to metrics, some are arguing for a calendar structured on units of ten. Have students design their own version of such a calendar and then consider how the routine of their lives might change. Do they favor a calendar conversion?

No. 2

THE LEARNING BOOTH



If you suspect that your students would enjoy (and work better in) a place where they could have a little privacy and concentrate on an individual project, the learning booth might be an excellent addition to your classroom.

Select a cardboard box with a base about the size of a student's desk top. The base will be the "floor," and one long side becomes the back wall of the learning booth. Slice diagonally down the two short sides of the box from the top of the back wall to the front edge of the floor. Then cut along the front edge and remove this portion from the box. From this cutaway portion — or from another box — cut a rectangle that will fit into the floor of the booth to provide an even writing surface.

The booth is now ready for interior and exterior decoration. Cover the booth's wall with paint, wallpaper, self-adhesive paper or even wrapping paper.

Although paper and other work materials can be pinned or taped inside the booth, the easiest way to accommodate varying assignments and users is to glue pockets of various sizes on the booth walls. Papers, pencils, manipulatives, flash cards, etc., can then be placed and replaced easily.

Learning booths are so simple to make that your students can help you construct extras if you should suddenly need more. If you want the booth to retain a special quality as well as serve real needs within your room, however, you may want to limit the number and to permit use by assignment only.

Idea by: David R. Adamson, Granite School District, Murray, Utah.

No. 3

CAFETERIA MENU GRAPH

Before your students start groaning about what they are or aren't getting in their school lunches this year, suggest that it may only *seem* as if the cafeteria features fish sticks every other day. Then add that the only way to objectify such objections is to gather some hard data.

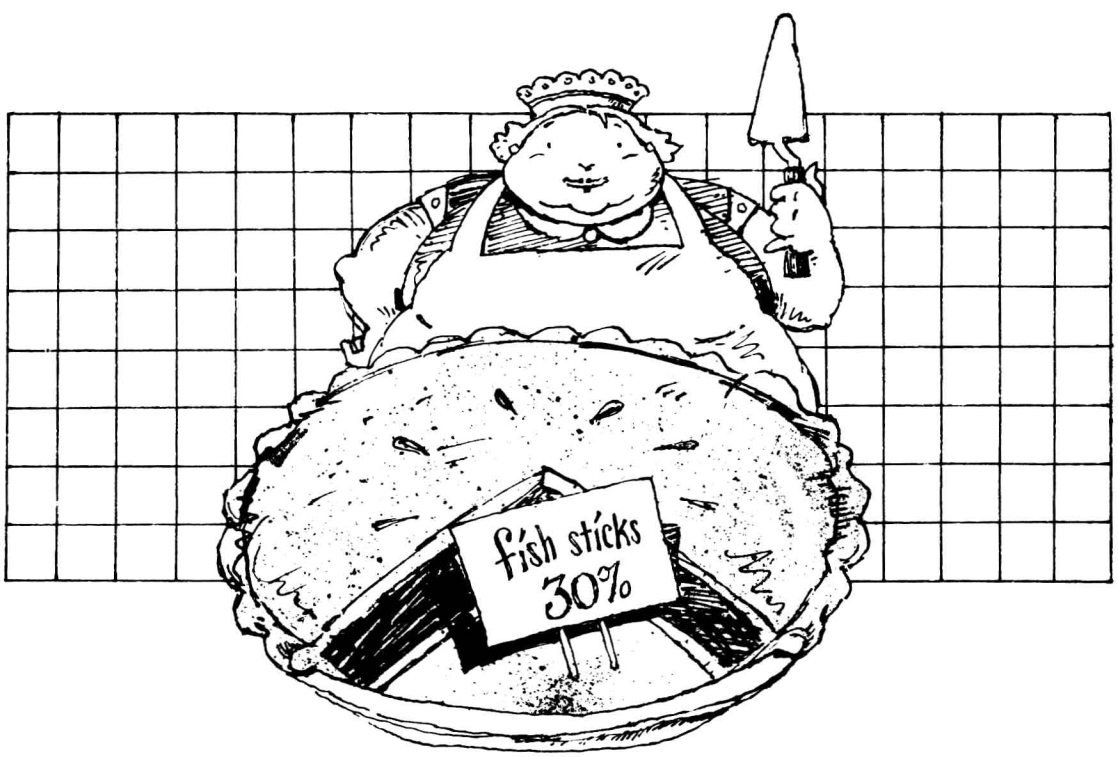
First, start saving the weekly lunch menus. Then, every week or every month (or — if you relish mammoth mounds of data — near the end of the school year) have groups of students chart the food statistics. Divide the items into categories, such as main dishes, vegetables and fruits, desserts. With each category on a separate chart, students can group menu items and keep a running tally as dishes reappear.

The charts might be filed for a few months before the first graphing takes place. The graphs could take several forms. A bar graph for each of the main categories could indicate the actual number of times each specific item was served over a stated period of time. Or challenge upper-grade students to determine percentages for each item — 27 fish stick meals out of 87 meals means fish sticks were served what percent of the time? The percentages could be graphed on a pie graph or on a 100-percent bar graph, which is somewhat easier to construct.

The graphs could be displayed in the classroom and become the focus for graph reading activities, nutrition discussions and perhaps some speculation about seasonal food purchasing, economics, etc.

At the end of the year or at midterm, you might share your students' statistics with the rest of the school by posting the graphs in the cafeteria. See what reactions — and perhaps menu modifications — the menu graphs bring.

Idea by: Leonard Goldberg, Fields Memorial School, Bozrah, Conn.



No. 4

A DARKROOM IN THE CLASSROOM

Sometimes being in the dark is a condition that needs to be arranged for, not avoided — especially in science teaching. Even if you have a lightproof area such as a closet, most likely there isn't much room left in it by this time of the year. So perhaps you have reason to see about constructing a classroom darkroom.

All you need is a large packing box (should be stove- or refrigerator-size, large enough for one or two children to get into comfortably), black paint and some tightly woven fabric or opaque plastic.

Cut off the top and bottom of the box. (Save the better-looking piece for a lid.) Paint the inside of the box black. Then set the box upright and cut out a small door (cut on two sides only so the door can be opened out and up). On the inside of the box hang a piece of dark fabric over the doorway, taping the fabric across the top edge only. The fabric will serve as a light lock. The top of the box can now be covered with a firmly woven piece of fabric, a blanket or a piece of opaque plastic (a fabric-lined plastic tablecloth works well). You can also set the lid on top to help seal out light leaks.

The darkroom is now ready for use. Try it out for observation of static electricity sparks; examination of things that glow in the dark; investigations of the effect of darkness on green plants, mold, mushrooms. With the top off, the darkroom can be converted into a planetarium. Plot a constellation or two on sheets of heavy wrapping paper large enough to cover the top of the darkroom. Poke holes where the stars are and put the paper over the top of the darkroom. The outside light showing through the star-holes will give children a picture of the night sky.

Fringe benefits: with the top off (and the box appropriately decorated) the darkroom can become a stage for hand- or stick-puppet productions. And the use of the darkroom may be of help to individuals who've been experiencing some apprehension about "the dark."

All this and it's portable and folds flat for storage!

Idea by: Helen Gow, Community College of Vermont, Montpelier, Vt.

No. 5

PERSONAL TIME CAPSULES

Everyone knows that things are constantly changing. Seasons recycle, bald baby birds grow feathers and fly away, skylines become crowded with new highrises, third graders become fourth graders. However, kids have a hard time noticing changes unless something sneaks up on them, like trying on last year's swimsuit and finding it's way too tight. Change is a hard thing to pin down.

A time capsule is one way a child has of keeping track of who he or she was a while back. A time capsule is like a scrapbook in a bottle. Not only is it fun to put together, but it's even more exciting to re-examine the contents on the last day of school.

Have each kid bring in a capsule that is weatherproof. A quart mayonnaise or peanut butter jar will be perfect. As a class, make a list of ideas for the contents. Your class might suggest collectibles such as these:

- An account of what you did today.
- A favorite rock.
- Movie listings for the week, or today's sports page.
- Some pictures you took at a booth.
- Tapes of your voice.
- A cassette recording of your favorite music.
- Gum wrappers, gum cards.
- A specimen from your insect collection.
- A cutting of your dog's hair.
- Bus tickets.
- Cracker Jack prizes, small toys.
- Snapshots of your best friends.
- A favorite poem.
- A brand new coin.
- A tooth that just fell out.
- Your pants size.
- Your height.
- A sample of your handwriting, perhaps on a list of your expectations for the year.
- A tracing of your foot and your shoe size.

Time capsules can have anything in them, although what seems nifty to your students now might seem silly later on. After all, they will be changed people in June.

After the kids have collected their various mementoes, have them put all the stuff in the bottles. They might want to seal the contents first in a plastic bag for a little extra insurance against water. Tell them to screw the lids on tight. Now "bury" the time capsules in some safe place — if the schoolyard doesn't seem practical, how about a dark corner of the classroom closet? Just remember they're there! At the end of the school year, have an opening ceremony. Notice any changes?

Idea by: Linda Allison, author of *The Wild Inside*, Sierra Club.

No. 6

KIDS PEDDLE NUTRITION

As fund raisers for class trips and other adventures, you can't beat bake sales and candy sales. But the extra calories and cavity-causing potential of sweet treats are not so welcome. How about a completely new approach to edible enterprise — fruit boosting!

Since fruit can add to the nutritiousness of a meal instead of spoiling it, you might be able to arrange for your students to make their fruit sales on a before-lunch tour of the school. (And imagine the colorful and appetizing advertising that fruits could inspire in your artists — all of whom can render an orange with ease.)

Managing a fruit sale means contacting a local produce supplier for fruit by the case and then preparing students for two kinds of jobs: vendors and cashiers. The head vendor becomes responsible for ordering the fruit, scheduling the classroom vendors (who goes to which room) and for checking in unsold fruit. The classroom vendors pack their boxes (they might start with 20 apples, 20 oranges and 10 bananas) and count up the fruit that's left after the sale. (Here's where you and the school budget may have to come to the aid. Be prepared to subsidize a few small, curriculum-related cook-ins.)

A cashier accompanies each vendor. Cashiers collect the correct amount for each purchase, make change and balance their accounts. The head cashier, besides scheduling the classroom cashiers, tallies the fruit sold, computes the money collected and makes the deposit.

A one-time sale could develop into a regular service. You also might consider adding peanuts, raisins and dried fruit to the line. What started out as a small project to raise money for a class trip may turn out to be a diverse learning experience. Students are introduced to supply and demand, profit and loss, cost analysis, overhead, advertising and promotion, quality control, health standards, staffing and scheduling. Nutrition consciousness is raised and math skills get a workout too.

Idea by: Penelope Zielinski, Detroit Public Schools, Detroit, Mich.

No. 7

PHOTOGRAPHIC SEATING CHARTS

Who needs seating charts? Certainly not the teacher who knows his or her kids and sees them daily. But what about classroom visitors — observers, administrators and especially substitute teachers? You can provide them with an up-to-date seating chart by obtaining a photograph of each of your students (have the kids bring pictures from home or order extra copies of class pictures) and arranging the pictures in proper order, identified below, on a piece of white paper. No chart making or secretarial work will be necessary — just a lot of smiling faces.

Idea by: C.C. Dunmore, St. Rose School, Wilmington, Ill.

No. 8

REPORTER OF THE WEEK

Here is an idea for capturing and keeping the year's events and ideas — with a sound dimension. Designate a "reporter of the week" — just as you appoint students for other rotating classroom jobs — whose responsibility it is to make a tape recording summarizing classroom happenings for the week. The reporter must be attentive to the week's happenings in the ongoing program as well as to special events — humorous moments, times of excitement, shared sadness. Other students can assist the reporter by submitting story ideas throughout the week. In introducing the reporter-of-the-week idea, you might discuss the sorts of items that seem to be weekly report material. But assure the students that each reporter will have considerable freedom in choosing what to report on.

Using notes or perhaps an outline, the reporter organizes collected material by categories or in chronological order. Writing a report could be an option — a challenge for some, an unreasonable chore for others. (This news-gathering activity may lead to research about newspaper and broadcast reporters and reporting, discussion of news stories, human interest stories, commentary, sports and weather, etc.)

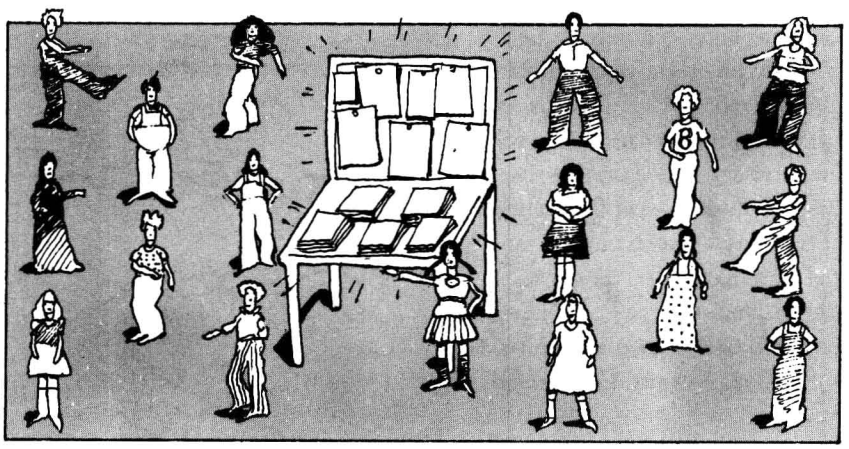
Reporting to the class is an every-Friday event, and students may want to devise a TV or radio "studio" setting where the action can take place. The reporter begins the tape by giving his or her name and identifying the week being reviewed. Some students may want to create individual "signature" phrases for signing off their reports in a personal way.

Tapes are preserved as a weekly log of the year's events. They can be played back on an individual basis or as a group activity, both for enjoyment and for historical research.

Idea by: Lori Goldman, Brooklyn, N.Y.

No. 9

CREATE A CENTER CENTER



Suppose you discovered 25 or more teacher aides who could be called upon to prepare learning centers for use in your room. The students in your class could be just the eager-eyed and able helpers for the job. If you sense an interest in center creation among your students, you might set up a "Center Center" devoted to the propagation of new centers.

At the Center Center, post suggestions to start students thinking. Perhaps they'd like to prepare a math game, a language activity master, an art and crafts project. Students prepare rough drafts of their center plans to be worked over, improved upon and later proofread. Students also determine what materials they'll need to put their centers into operation, taking into consideration what's readily available. Then the center assembling takes place.

Schedule each student-made center for a week's use and post the schedule so that a student can check to see when his or her center will be "on."

In view of all the planning, organizing, creating and improving, as well as the drive to see a project through, you may find the Center Center to be the most valuable center of the year.

Idea by: Dorothy Hirschman, Edison, N.J.

No. 10

TV BOX PRESENTATIONS

The TV box is a great confidence builder for kids. It starts its career as a refrigerator packing box. Then a door large enough for a child is cut in the back. A window cut in the front acts as a TV screen. Children can paint on control knobs and decorations.

You might initiate the use of the TV box by trying takeoffs on TV game shows. The box will accommodate just one "contestant" at a time, so panel shows are out. And the emcee (you or a child) will also have to operate from outside the box. Gather a small group for an audience — and prospective contestant pool — and it's on with the show.

The emcee does a little warm-up interviewing at first, finding out the contestant's name, where he or she is from, special interests, family, etc. Some children will stick to the facts, but others may enjoy making up imaginary identities and life situations.

The game part of the show should be carried off in an authentic show-biz manner, but the content can consist of whatever drill material the class is working on — math facts, spelling, geography. Students should be asked to perform reasonable tasks with non-threatening time limits, or the fun will soon dissolve.

Six correct answers might win a prize — cruises, cars, homework passes, special activities, whatever your creativity conjures up.

The TV box can also be used for interviews: figures from history, workers in various occupations, visitors from countries you're studying (or from other planets). The box provides an ideal vehicle for reviewing or presenting material.

And of course the TV box has many recreational uses. You may find that children who will "do anything" for attention will be eager contenders for TV box time — to the extent of monitoring their own behavior outside the box so that they will be allowed time inside.

The charm of the TV box is in its specialness. It should never be overused. As potential uses come to mind or are suggested by the children, note them for the future, and reserve the TV box for classroom prime time usage only.

Idea by: Joyce S. Reagin, Greenwood, S.C.

No. 11

THE MONTH TRAIN

One way for early primary grade children to learn the months of the year is for them to associate each month with a symbol — something that tells what happens during that time of the year. Create a symbol for each month: a leaf for September, a witch for October, a turkey or fruit basket for November and so on. Then, on a duplicating master, draw an engine pulling 12 train cars and print the name of one month inside each car. Run off copies of the train and give one to each child. Each month have the children draw the appropriate symbol over the month's train car. At the end of the year the names of the months should be well in hand, and each child will have an artistic memento of the class.

Idea by: Delores Hines, Washington School, Chicago, Ill.