

# Building End-of-Year Memories

## Delightful K-1 Celebrations to End Your Year

Updated April 2024

***We are responsible for the memories of childhood!***



Photos used with permission of parents and educators

Children come to school with diverse background experiences. It is the stories we tell, the songs we sing, and the traditions we build that bind the children together emotionally and intellectually, creating an optimal climate for learning, both social-emotional and academic.



**Over the Years My Kindergarten Colleagues and I Have Shared Many Vignettes of Memorable Classroom Rituals, Traditions, and Celebrations**

For us, school has always been a “celebrative place.” We delight in making each child’s learning experience more memorable and meaningful through thoughtful attention to classroom rituals, traditions, and celebrations rich in the arts. These symbolic acts help us build a thriving community of learners.

## Choose and Adapt 1 of These 7 Delightful End-of-Year Celebrations

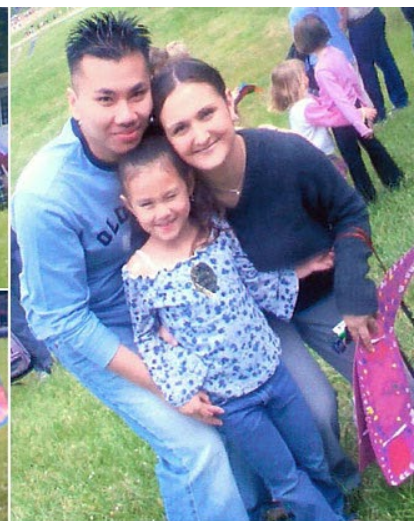
### 1. A Magical Hug Turns You into a First Grader!

I am remembering a story of the year-end ritual that kindergarten teacher Barbara Sagen told. She gathered the children around her, and together they remembered many of the magical things they had shared during the year. On that last day of school, they remembered their field trip to the pumpkin patch, the eggs that hatched, and becoming the "Three Billy Goats Gruff" and other story characters. And then she said, **"But today we're going to do the most magical thing of all—we're going to turn you into first graders! We're going to do it with a hug."** She put on special music, rolled out the red carpet of butcher paper, and one at a time, she called the children up to her. Barb took time to share with each child something special that she would always remember about them, and then they hugged. "And I've never had such hugs!" The child stepped away with a look of wonder and transformation on his face, saying, "I'm a first grader now." **Hugs and kind words always make memorable farewells.**



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### 2. Try on Your Wings and Fly Down the Hill: Now You're a First Grader!



Happy kindergartners in Eugene, Oregon, may be busy hand-painting wings this month for their End-of-the-Year Kindergarten Fly-Away Celebration. Parent volunteers trace and cut out a set of wings for each child. One of the teachers explains, **"After the children paint their wings**

with bright colors and designs (and sometimes feathers and glitter), we attach two elastic straps to hold these on their arms. On our last day of school, families are invited for an informal picnic lunch and Popsicle event, which concludes with the children donning their wings and 'flying away' from kindergarten. **Children love the effect of flying in their wings down the sloping hills and meadow areas at the edge of the school woods!"**

Families watch and applaud at the bottom of the hill as their joyful child comes floating up and down again and again. What a lovely, symbolic way to bring closure to a magical kindergarten year! This is still one of my **favorite year-end rituals**. Consider playing the music *I Believe I Can Fly* by R. Kelly or *What a Wonderful World* by Louis Armstrong

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### 3. Singing, Signing, and Dancing Are a Part of Kathie Bridges' Joyful End-of-Year Celebration

For another delightful end-of-the-year language celebration, see The End-of-Year Rap from Kathie Bridges' joyful kindergarten. She says, "Hardly a day goes by that we don't dance together." These children have been enjoying moving and performing to rhythms and sounds all year: Now they're real pros!

- [Video clip - End-of-Year Rap](#) ("The Addams Family" rhythm)
- With appreciation to Nora Flanagan at [littlegiraffes.com](http://littlegiraffes.com) for the original inspiration for this song.



Kathie Bridges is a master at dancing, singing, signing, and celebrating language with children. Here are her dancing tips for you!

Duh-duh-duh-duh (snap, snap)...  
We learned our ABC's  
And counting 1,2,3's  
And now we know all these  
The kindergarten class.  
We learned how to share  
We learned how to care  
Just ask us if you dare  
The kindergarten class.

Duh-duh-duh-duh (stomp, stomp)...  
It seems we've just begun  
And now we're almost done  
This year's been so much fun  
The kindergarten class.  
And now we say so long  
With this our little song  
We'll be back before too long  
As the first grade class!

Duh-duh-duh-duh (clap, clap)...  
"First Grade!"

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## 4. The Kinder Stars' Year-End Celebration of Language for Proud Families

The Kinder Stars from Celeste Starr's kindergarten are waiting to shine for their proud families. They begin with a moving American Sign Language performance of "I Pledge Allegiance" to the music of Lee Greenwood on The American Patriot CD. (View Free ASL instructional video.) Parents are moved, delighted, and very appreciative of teachers who celebrate the lives of their children with songs in sign language.



- View [ABC Phonics: Sing, Sign, and Read! Instructional Video](#)
- View the free [Pledge of Allegiance ASL Instructional Video](#)

## 5. Our Drawing Shows How Much We've Grown!



Children are **amazed** at how much they've grown as writers and artists in kindergarten. One part of our end-of-school-year rituals is cleaning up the room and taking things down. This is a great time for noticing how different our end-of-year drawing and writing is from the beginning of the year. **We intentionally nurture a growth mindset!**

*"You worked hard. Look how much you've grown!"*

*"Wow, Timothy! You must be proud of your growth as an artist!"*



## 6. End-of-Year Author's Celebration Invites Families to Delight in Published Books from Prolific Kindergarten Writers!



Accomplished writing teachers, Jaime Corliss and Katie Nelson, hold an author's celebration where proud young writers share their published books. Families are encouraged to keep reading, making books, and having fun all summer long!

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## 7. A Kindergarten Celebration of Art Is Part of This End-of-Year Family Event

Retired teacher Laura Flocker's year-end family celebrations featured a kindergarten art gallery in the hall.

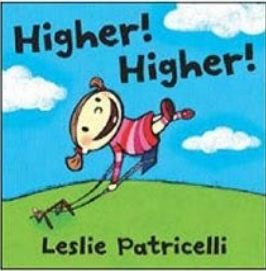
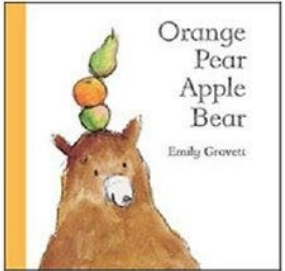
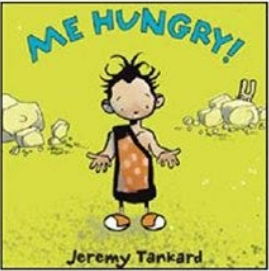
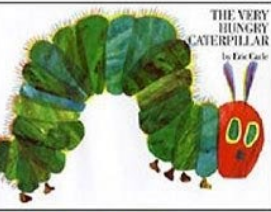
She has demonstrated how **learning to draw with detail transfers to writing with detail.**

*"Look at the detail and all the colors in your flowers!"*


*"How did you learn to draw like that?"*



**Give Families a Book Lovers' Guide to Best Books for Reading Aloud over the Summer**  
**Find Favorite Predictable Books at the Library: Snuggle up and**  
**Read With Your Child Every Day!**

 <p><b>Higher! Higher!</b> by Leslie Patricelli. (Candlewick Press, 2009)</p>	 <p><b>Orange Pear Apple Bear</b> by Emily Gravett. (Simon and Schuster, 2007)</p>	 <p><b>Me Hungry</b> by Jeremy Tankard. Walker Books, 2009.</p>	 <p><b>The Very Hungry Caterpillar</b> by Eric Carle. Collins World, 1989.</p>
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See TPT store for "A Family Guide to Growing Readers" (24 pages of book lists and support for parents)

 <p><b>Family Guide to Growing Readers</b> 26-page Parents as Partners Packet Read aloud to your child everyday! www.NellieEdge.com</p>	 <p><b>Poetry Notebook Bundle</b> "I Can Read!"</p>	 <p><b>Social Emotional Learning in Kindergarten BUNDLE</b> Spark Joy All Year Long Nellie Edge</p>
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[Visit our TPT Store](#)

We remind families to keep singing and talking, dancing and reading, writing and exploring nature all summer. Fun family learning can be as simple as enjoying neighborhood walks.



**Happy summer days to you and the children with whom you've danced and sung with this year!**

**SMILES!**