Birthdays/Christmas Gifts

Birthdays:

On the second day of class for the year, I go over rules, incentive programs, the blue cards, grading, etc. after having a fun getting-to-know-you game. Part of the day's activities includes having the students fill out a student survey or see below. Whenever that student has a birthday, I read the information on the survey—that which isn't personal (not giving the name of the person if the class doesn't already know), and they guess who it is. The other information on the survey (like rate your testimony) is for my own information—these sheets tell me a lot about the individual students.

I've tried different things to do for birthdays, which include the following:

1. Provide a tape recorder and a tape and have everyone say a message to the birthday person, then give the tape to the person. The students liked doing this, but it is distracting if you are trying to give a regular lesson; so I did away with this activity after the first couple of years.
2. I logged onto some site (don't remember which now) on the internet that tells interesting facts that happened on certain dates, as well as famous people who have that birthday. I took that information and printed it on pretty birthday paper, laminated it and gave it to the student after reading the most interesting facts to the rest of the class.
3. I gave a giant sized candy bar of the favorite candy listed on the Student Survey to the student for their birthday (I did this for about 2 years). If their favorite candy didn't come in a giant size, I bought 3 of the regular size, tied them with ribbons and presented those to the birthday person.
4. I told the Parents at our Fireside the Sunday before Seminary started for the year that on the birthday of each student, if they would like, they could send in a treat for the rest of the class. Some parents did this and others did not.
5. Now I am buying a cake at the local grocery store and bringing it to class on that person's birthday. The other seminary teacher in our building was doing that, and I think my students felt left out, so I started doing it this year. You could also make a birthday cake if you have the inclination or the time.
6. You could also make the student's favorite dessert if you wanted, but I haven't done this—I find it often takes more time than what I have on some days. That's why I prefer to buy a cake.
7. For the past 6 or so years, I have found a perfect birthday gift to give to the students. I saw it at "The Quilted Bear" in Salt Lake City. It is a little flip chart made from wood and dowels of different sizes. Then you buy the sets of Mormonads from the Distribution Center that cost $.50, punch two holes near the top and attach them to the wooden base with 1" metal rings. I present one set with the wooden base to the Freshmen (or any new students I have that year) and then just a different set of cards which have been separated and punched to the rest of the students, since they already have the wooden base. I use a different set of cards for each age group. This seems to be a very appropriate gift to give. I make up about 20 bases at a time (with the help of a friend who has all the machinery) and store them until I need them; so preparation is very minimal. (See Picture.)

If the student has a summer birthday, we celebrate their birthday 6 months from their birthday. I prepare a calendar which every student is given a copy at the beginning of the year, so they know when their birthday will be celebrated.

Christmas:

I've tried different Christmas gifts also: ornaments, objects that I have made, items that went along with a Christmas story (chocolate orange for the Christmas Orange story, or a small nativity set for the story about the little girl who was so thrilled to give her mother the best Christmas present in the world—a little nativity set, etc.). I've never really been happy with what I gave them because whatever it was just didn't seem appropriate. That is until this past year. The only problem with this gift is that it takes oodles of time.

For each student, I bought a loose-leaf binder that is half the size of regular binders so that I could print two stories on a sheet of paper if they are formatted in landscape style to put in it. I bought the binders at Office Depot for $4.95. Then I went through all my lessons that I had given that year and copied each story that I presented in class onto a sheet of paper (2 stories per paper—landscape). When I typed up the story, in the upper right-hand corner, I typed a word that referred to the subject of that story (i.e., Prayer). I cut them apart, punched holes in them in the appropriate place to put in the binder, and then placed them in the binder alphabetically by subject. Then over Spring Break, I did another set for them covering the stories from January until that time; and then did another set at the end of the school year. I can't think of a more appropriate gift than this. The students can use them for their missions (hence the smaller-sized binder) for thoughts that they give in YM/YW, and for future seminary years. They even can use them as adults for preparing sacrament meeting talks and lessons for callings they may receive. This way they have portions of lessons that I gave throughout the year in a format that they can use for the rest of their lives.

This is a project that can be continually updated throughout the school year rather than waiting until right before Christmas. Whenever a teacher has a few minutes over the weekend or in the evening or whenever, time could be devoted to this project. Some of my students last year thought it was the greatest gift I could have given them and were thrilled with it.

STUDENT SURVEY

Last name: _____ First: _____ Name you prefer to go by: _____

Birthday: _____ Birthplace: _____ Grade in school: _____ School: _____

Mother's name: _____ Father's name: _____ Brothers/Sisters' names and ages: _____

_____

Describe your family: _____

Activities, sports, clubs, organizations: _____

What do you want to be (career, etc.): _____ Name a goal you have:_____

One thing you like about your best friend: _____

If you could do one thing all day long, what would it be? _____

The one thing you will never say to your kids is: _____

A talent you have: _____

List your favorites:

Candy: _____ Seminary snack: _____ Ice Cream: _____

Dessert: _____ Food: _____ Fast food place: _____

Drink: _____ Theme park: _____ Ride: _____

Indoor sport: _____ Outdoor sport: _____ Car: _____

Sports team: _____ Singing group: _____ Hymn: _____

Radio station: _____ TV show: _____ Movie: _____

Movie star: _____ Color: _____ School class: _____

Saying: _____ Scripture: _____ General Authority: _____

Prophet: _____ Person(s) in the scriptures: _____

Who would you like to be like? _____ What you like about yourself: _____

If you could have dinner with anyone in history, it would be with _____

Why are you enrolled in Seminary? _____ Rate your testimony from 1 to 10: _____

What you would like from me this year in Seminary: _____

What you hope to get from Seminary this year: _____

What you know about the Book of Mormon as of now: _____