

# THE MEMORY BOX & GRADUATION

THE  
MEMORY  
BOX



A memory box holds treasured mementoes and souvenirs  
of key events in the child's school life



## BUILDING A MEMORY BOX

'*Souvenir*' means 'to remember', and the memory box is a souvenir of primary-school days. Any shoebox or similar with lid can be used to hold these personal, and precious, memories. The box and lid may be decorated in class using fabric or coloured paper, or with photographs of the child, or simply illustrated by the child him/herself – but the design and decoration of each box will be individual to its owner.

Some schools may begin storing treasures for the memory box in the infant classroom – teachers might file away a painted handprint or footprint, or keep a photograph of some scene from each child's first day at school. Children in the middle school might be asked to brainstorm key events for inclusion on their personal timelines. Ideas from the entire class might be written on the board or flipchart so that memories will be prompted. Again, these would be stored in the school if the memory boxes haven't been started at this point. Some schools may ask the senior pupils to design their own portfolio or tube to hold paintings or artwork – this could then be used to store artwork particularly important to each child.

Memory boxes are often begun in fifth class when the children are beginning to look back over their primary-school lives, but they might be started in fourth and passed on to the fifth-class teacher; the boxes could also

be started at the beginning of sixth year, when discussions about farewell ceremonies will begin. The boxes should be easily accessible to the children, perhaps stored on the lower shelves in a storeroom, so that each child can, without difficulty or disturbing anyone, store a memory in his/her box. The children should be encouraged to consider putting in photographs of themselves, eg planting bulbs or flowers or taking part in sports events; photographs of visiting authors and speakers, bus tickets purchased on class trips to award ceremonies or other events, certificates of achievement – anything and everything that will in future remind them of their final years in primary school can be stored in the memory box.

The memory box, with lid firmly closed, should be tied with a red or other coloured ribbon and presented to each child at the school's farewell or graduation ceremony. The boxes might be opened on this night, either with family members or with classmates. Some children might be asked to share some of their memories with those present by showing and talking about some of the contents of their boxes. The children might be encouraged to keep these memory boxes – they might even bring them to a class reunion at some time in the future. These boxes contain memories that they and their families will value in years to come.

### LUCY'S MEMORY BOX

*Lucy is ethnically Chinese, but born in Ireland*

What items, do you think, might Lucy have saved in her memory box?

Because she is ethnically Chinese, do you think she might have included red envelopes from when the school celebrated Chinese New Year? Red envelopes containing money are often presented on Chinese social and family occasions such as weddings or funerals, or on a holiday such as Chinese New Year.

Do you think the other children would have included memories about this festival, or might it have been more significant for Lucy?

Some children may well have included mementoes of festivals and celebrations such as Hallowe'en and Christmas. Might some children have ignored these occasions because they don't celebrate them for religious or cultural reasons?





## ABBI AND KUNLE

### ABBI'S MEMORY BOX

Ideas and issues to discuss with your class taking into account the points of view of Abbi, Lilian and Kunle

Abbi fills her box with

- Dublin Bus tickets from school trips
- an invitation to an award ceremony when her class won a prize
- photographs of visitors to her school
- photographs of her friends and her teachers.

She knows exactly what memory each token evokes and her mother, Lilian, probably does too as she will have heard all about each school trip and author-visit or other event as it happened. Lilian will also recognise any photographs of the school and teachers, so the memory box will mean a lot to both Abbi and Lilian.

#### CHILDREN WHO RELOCATE

Many children leave school without having completed a full academic year in that school – some may leave because their parents or carers have been offered work in a new county or country, some because the family has been rehoused in a new place, while members of the Travelling community may leave because the family has decided to move to another part of the country.

Think about the memory boxes these children may have started – do you think they may have been reluctant to begin a memory box knowing they might miss the farewell ceremony and the presentation of the boxes?

Do you think these children might store very particular objects in their boxes? Can you suggest objects that children accustomed to regularly moving home might store in their boxes and how, if at all, these objects might differ from those of the children who have always lived in the same area?

How might you welcome these children and their carers back for the graduation ceremony? Could your school make the day comfortable and enjoyable by organising games or other events to create an inclusive atmosphere so that no one will feel left out?

#### WHAT WILL IT MEAN TO KUNLE?

But what will it mean to Kunle when he gets it in the post? Kunle has been in Nigeria and hasn't been part of Abbi's school life for the past few years.

- Will he recognise a Dublin Bus ticket, and if he does, what can it mean to him?
- If he takes out postcards or pens or other 'goody bag' items (bookmarks, pencils, postcards etc) of the sort often distributed during Children's Book Festival events in October, what will these mean to him?
- If he looks at photographs of Abbi and her friends, do you think he will recognise them from having heard Abbi speak about them on the phone, or is it possible that Abbi doesn't speak about school when on the phone as long-distance calls are so expensive?
- Do you think it is possible that the memory box will cause him pain/make him feel more lonely, and make him long even more to be reunited with his wife and daughter?
- Can you suggest items that Abbi might include that would be more universally recognised mementoes of her school life, ones that might be familiar to Kunle and that would bring him pride and joy? (Certificates, merit awards, examples of neat work etc, are all possibilities that may be suggested by the children.)

#### DISCUSSION

##### Boys' and Girls' Memory Boxes

Do you think that the items selected by the boys in the class might differ in any way from those chosen by the girls? If your school doesn't keep memory boxes, ask various members of the class for their opinion on this. If you do keep memory boxes, you might compile a list of items that appear only in the boys' boxes, or only in the girls' boxes, or that are common to both. Discuss your findings.





# THE MEMORY BOX

## THE MEMORY BOX AND THE GRADUATION CEREMONY

### THE GRADUATION CEREMONY

A graduation or farewell ceremony is a very important time in a child's life. It celebrates the end of the child's time in primary school and the beginning of secondary school. Children may be centrally involved in the planning and organisation of the graduation or farewell ceremony.

The following ideas may be used as a guide. Children can brainstorm and subsequently plan within the following areas:

- finding inspiration
- circle time to discuss children's key memories of school life
- choosing a central theme: celebration, new challenges and opportunities, etc.
- designing the hall/assembly area
- wall displays reflecting the ethos of the school
- flags representing the school and the countries of origin of the children in the class/school
- display area reflecting various significant occasions during school years, including photos, children's previous work/projects, group events etc.
- timeline
- photo display or slideshow
- designing an invitation and preparing an invite-list
- invitees might include family members, school staff, previous staff members, past pupils, members of the community, local politicians
- designing a logo reflecting class and school community
- designing a stamp for invitation envelopes
- designing an advertisement/poster to publicise the event
- brainstorming on who keynote speaker/s may be
- debating the pros and cons of having formal and/or informal speaker/s on the night
- speakers representing ethnic diversity of the school community
- other possibilities include local/inspirational author, local/inspirational sportsperson, local politician, pop star, etc.
- memory box display.

#### ***Creative input***

- write and produce a play
- compose poetry (reflective/humorous/inspirational)
- speech-writing
- design a programme for guests.

#### ***Further considerations***

- clothes: formal/informal, uniform, school colours
- music: reflect ethos/school choir/traditional/live
- food/refreshments: representing ethnic diversity of school community, preparation of food by external company/parents/children in class
- meet and greet.

### THE MEMORY BOOK

This is an end-of-school-year activity, the completion of a book the students have been preparing perhaps for the past few years. This is a wonderful book for the students, telling about themselves, their friends, and their favourite classroom events. Now they should present it in the best possible way.

#### ***Children may need:***

- paper
- printer
- crayons, pen, or markers
- hole punch and some yarn, or a stapler, to bind the book
- glue-stick and photo of student (optional)

Bind the pages of the book by stapling them together, or by punching holes in the left margin and tying the pages together with a ribbon. Or punch holes and put the book in a folder or a notebook.

Cover the book with a self-portrait. Use a variety of media. Include personal information about friends and those they sat beside; include the names of teachers, the principal, SNAs or classroom assistants who may have worked in their classroom etc.

Suggest that the students pass the books around for signing in an autograph section.

