

## Asking students to help take care of errands and tasks is always a good idea.

Assuming the task at hand is age appropriate and there are no supervision issues, I'm all in favor of students helping out in meaningful ways. It's more of a relationship thing than a taking-care-of-business kind of deal.

The only tricky part is the communication strategy. For years it was me *asking* a student to take care of something. Predictably, the system wasn't terribly reliable. And that was especially true if the student hadn't headed off immediately to take care of the task. If the task were put off for even a bit, the success rate suffered. Either the student ended up forgetting about the task, or I failed to get a timely status update on the progress.

Most likely outcome? Conflict and frustration. Not all that much, mind you, but enough to be annoying. And you don't have to put up with annoying. As my brain-guru, Len Torres, is fond of saying, "Reality can be changed." So, TRY THIS.

[I'll save you the journey I took from spoken words to written ones. And even though a quick note was better—less forgetting on their part—we still had the issue of me following-up.]

No, the Simple Solution was to purchase a spiral-bound While You Were Out message pad. [Adams® Phone Message Book, 8 1/2" x 5 1/4", 300 Messages, \$5.99.]

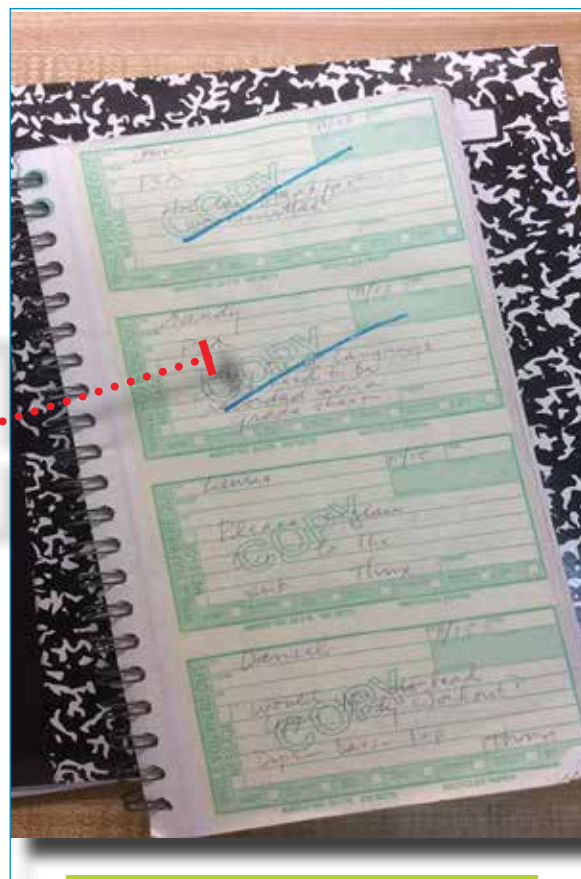
The student received the original copy. And I've got to tell you, they thought it was really cool getting a request from the boss to take care of something. That small gesture on my part fed the limbic brain's need for power and fun.

The bonus feature, though, was the fact that I had in my hand a simple way to monitor the task status. It was the NCR copy of the task request that was being held in the loving arms of the pad's spiral.

All I had to do was pick up the message pad and look for any entry that didn't have a highlighter slash through it.

And now that both issues—forgetting and follow-up—had been resolved, empowering students to help out successfully lightened my load and boosted the quality of the relationships in the classroom. Not bad.

And just think about how many notes you could create in just one staff meeting. The mind boggles.



Try This 01 is an excerpt from the book, *Tools & Toys: 50 Fun Ways to Love Your Class.*