

Dennis-Yarmouth Regional School District

Office of Instruction Newsletter

September 2023

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Important Dates

September 4	Labor Day
September 5	Teacher Professional Day
September 6	First Student Day
September 12	SAE Open House
September 14	DYH Open House
September 15	Rosh Hashanah (begins at sundown)
September 19	DYI/DYM Open House
September 20	MES Open House
September 21	EHBi Open House International Day of Peace
September 23	Autumn begins @2:49pm
September 24	Yom Kippur (begins at sundown)
September 27	1.5 hour Early Release Day

September (18 days)						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

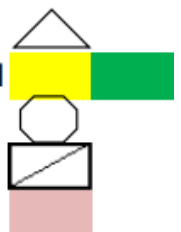
First and last days of school

Holiday/Vacation - no school

Tea. Prof. Day - no school

1/2 day of sch. - students

1.5 hr. early rel. students



Back to School Tips

As summer comes to an end, teachers are gearing up for another school year filled with excitement, challenges, and opportunities for growth. Starting the year strong is crucial for setting a positive tone that can carry through the rest of the year. A solid foundation helps to build a positive classroom culture, establish routines, and build strong relationships with students and families. Whether you're a new teacher or a veteran teacher, these tips can help you establish a positive and productive classroom environment that will benefit you and your students throughout the year.

Get Organized

The [first day of school](#) can be overwhelming, especially for new teachers, with many tasks to accomplish and things to prepare. Getting organized is crucial to starting the year strong and feeling in control. Read on for tips to help you get organized.

1. Organize your classroom and materials

A [well-organized classroom](#) can create a positive student learning environment. Take time to set up your classroom in a way that makes sense for you and your teaching style. Consider creating designated spaces for different areas of instruction, such as a reading nook or a science center. Organize your materials and supplies in a way that makes them easily accessible.

2. Create a daily routine and schedule

[Managing your time](#) well by establishing a daily routine and schedule can help you feel more in control and reduce stress. Plan out your day, including time for instruction, small-group work, and independent work. Consider setting aside specific times for grading, lesson planning, and other administrative tasks. Stick to your schedule as much as possible to establish consistency for you and your students.

3. Set goals for the year

[Setting goals](#) can help you stay focused and motivated throughout the year. Consider what you want to accomplish with your students, such as academic or behavioral goals. Break down large goals into smaller, actionable steps to help you stay on track. Regularly check in on your progress and adjust your goals as needed.

By getting organized, creating a daily routine and schedule, and setting goals for the year, you can start the school year feeling prepared and in control.

Build Positive Relationships

Building positive relationships with students and families is essential for good classroom management and helps you start the year strong. Positive relationships can help to create a supportive and productive learning environment, promote student engagement and motivation, and help to reduce disruptive behaviors. Here are some tips for building positive relationships from the beginning of the year.

1. Connect with students and families

Take the time to get to know your students and their families. Consider sending home a questionnaire or holding a meet-and-greet before school starts to learn more about your students' interests, strengths, and needs. Make an effort to greet students by [name](#) and show interest in their lives.

2. Create a positive classroom culture

Establishing a [positive classroom culture](#) can help to create a supportive and respectful learning environment. Consider creating classroom rules together with your students and celebrating successes and achievements. Encourage kindness and empathy, and model positive behavior for your students.

3. Tips for effective communication

Communication is key to building positive relationships with students and families. Consider using various communication methods like email, phone calls, or **parent-teacher conferences**. Be clear and concise in your communication, and listen actively to what others say. Be open and honest about student progress and challenges.

By connecting with students and families, creating a positive classroom culture, and using effective communication, you can build positive relationships that will benefit you and your students throughout the year.

Plan Engaging Lessons

One of the keys to starting the year strong is to **plan lessons** that will capture students' attention and motivate them to learn. Read on for ways to create engaging lessons for any grade level or subject area.

1. Create a curriculum map

A curriculum map is a high-level overview of what will be taught during the year, broken down by units or topics. Creating a curriculum map can help you ensure you cover all the necessary material and pace yourself appropriately.

2. Plan challenging lessons

Consider what will be most interesting and relevant to your students. Use various teaching methods, such as group work, discussions, and hands-on activities, to help students stay engaged. Ensure the content is appropriately challenging but not too difficult for students to understand.

3. Incorporate technology into lessons

Technology can be a powerful tool for engaging students and enhancing learning. Consider incorporating technology into your lessons, such as interactive whiteboards, educational apps, or online resources.

By planning engaging lessons that are relevant and challenging, you can motivate your learners and set them up for success throughout the school year.

Address Student Needs

To be an effective teacher, it's important to recognize that every student has unique needs and learning styles. Here are some top tips for addressing student needs.

1. Identify and address students' individual needs

Get to know your students and their learning styles. Consider their interests, strengths, and weaknesses when planning lessons and assignments. Create opportunities for regular formative and summative **assessment** to track their progress. Offer extra help or support for students who are struggling.

2. Accommodations for students with special needs

Students with **special needs** may require accommodations to help them learn and succeed. Work with your school's special education team to develop accommodations supporting these students.

3. Building relationships with students who struggle behaviorally or academically

Students who struggle with behavior or academics may benefit from extra attention and support. **Build positive relationships** with these students and try to understand the underlying reasons for their struggles. Offer them opportunities to succeed and recognize their achievements.

By addressing the individual needs of your students, you can create a more inclusive and supportive classroom environment that promotes learning and success for all students.

Take Care of Yourself

Teaching is a demanding job that can easily lead to burnout if you don't care for yourself. Read on for ways to prioritize **self-care** as a classroom teacher.

1. Prioritizing self-care to avoid burnout

Take breaks throughout the day to recharge and avoid feeling overwhelmed. Engage in stress-reducing activities such as exercise or meditation, and practice self-compassion and [mindfulness](#).

2. Finding a balance between work and personal life

Set boundaries and [manage your workload](#) to avoid bringing work home with you. Make time for hobbies, socializing, and other activities that bring you joy and fulfillment outside work. This can be particularly challenging for first year teachers, but also more experienced teachers too.

3. Utilizing school resources such as counseling or wellness programs

Many schools offer resources such as counseling services or wellness programs for their staff. Take advantage of these resources to support your mental and emotional well-being.

By prioritizing self-care and balancing work and personal life, you can avoid burnout and become an effective and fulfilled teacher. Remember that taking care of yourself is essential for your well-being and your students' success.

Best Advice for Back To School

Starting the school year strong is important for setting a positive tone for the rest of the year. That said, don't forget that things don't always go to plan, and it's okay to make mistakes and learn from them. Use these tips and strategies to help you feel more confident and prepared for the challenges that lie ahead.

Remember that being kind to yourself, focusing on your well-being, and prioritizing self-care are necessary for you can be at your best to support your students and help them succeed. So, stay positive and enjoy the journey of another school year!

Back to School Classroom Management Tips

Good classroom management can make or break a school year, so it's no surprise that many teachers gave tips about classroom management and disciplining students. Many teachers stressed the importance of starting off strict at the beginning of the year and practicing procedures and routines over and over again. [\(Check out 17 fun ways to review classroom procedures here.\)](#)

- "Start off strictly the first few weeks of school so students learn expectations, then you'll be able to have fun the rest of the year because your classroom will be under control!" -Cassidy Vera, 5th Grade Dual Language
- "After you discipline a student, let it go. Don't carry over to the next day. Treat every day as a new slate for each child. Everyone has a bad day sometimes and nobody likes to be reminded of it." -Anonymous
- "Be consistent. Students need structure and to know they can trust you." -Anonymous
- "Create or revise your list of classroom procedures and think of fun ways to teach them (you can check out [these classroom management ideas](#))." -Anonymous
- "Don't take student behavior or a parent misunderstanding personally." -Anonymous

[This free classroom procedures checklist](#) can help you figure out what procedures you need to consistently practice in your 3rd, 4th, or 5th grade classroom.

- "Commit a small corner of the board for the first thing in the morning routines, directions and assignments. I learned early on that if I didn't write down exactly what I wanted the students to do, where to place homework and papers from home, etc. I would be repeatedly answering the question, "What are we supposed to be doing?" -Angela Rochelle, 3rd grade
- "Establish your expectations right from the getgo. Be fair, but firm. And follow through with the consequences you set. Make sure your students know that you mean business and any inappropriate behaviors will be

addressed. Setting this part of your management up in the beginning will greatly improve how the rest of your school year will go." -Danielle C., 6th grade

- "Use the first weeks of school to establish routines and assess. It seems like you may be wasting time, but it will definitely pay off in the long run!" -Anna Barefoot, Resource PreK-5
- "I use poker chips to help make some of my students aware of behaviors like blurting or being out of their seats. They pay me a chip each time they have the behavior. If they don't use all their chips in one day, they earn a sticker. Once they earn x number of stickers they get a reward. The student and I work out how many chips he or she'll have for that day ahead of time. I stay most with 15-20 and over a few weeks go down to 5-8. Works like a charm!" -Anonymous

Building a Positive Classroom Community Tips

Although this section could also probably be considered Classroom Management, there were so many teachers stressed the importance of building a classroom community that I had to include it as its own section.

Many of the teachers below emphasized the importance of greeting each child daily in order to build relationships, which is [a change that I made to my morning routine that made a huge \(positive\) difference!](#)

Before you head back to school, make sure you have a plan in place for building a positive classroom community. It can be as simple as [regularly facilitating positive conversation between your students with questions like these.](#)

Or, try out some of these other ways to build a trusting classroom community.

- "Make a personal connection with each student each day (greet them at the door every morning - handshake- then a high five before they leave to go home)." -Anonymous
- "Greet each student every day - even the ones who irritate you on a regular basis!" -Anonymous
- "Spend quality time at the beginning of the school year to create a classroom community and relationships with your students." -Anonymous
- "Connect with each child by name and eye contact with something personal to build them up EVERY SINGLE DAY." -Anonymous
- "Above all else focus on building individual relationships with your students." -Anonymous
- "Write notes to your students. It makes them feel special and maintains a positive climate." -Anonymous
- "Remember to cultivate kindness and love at the beginning of the year. It's the most important thing you'll do all year!" -Anonymous

[These tips for cultivating a culture of kindness in the classroom](#) might help you build the positive classroom environment you want.

Time Management Tips

If you don't use your time wisely, you won't be able to survive in education for very long. The teachers below gave back to school teacher tips for utilizing your students and parent volunteers, using your time wisely, and for letting go of things that you don't have time for.

A common back to school teacher tip was to make sure you are letting your students help! Sometimes assigning classroom jobs can feel like more trouble than it is worth, but [there are systems you can easily set up that make classroom jobs a huge time saver in your classroom!](#)

- "...Something that has been really beneficial in my classroom (6th grade in an elementary setting) is that if a student can do it, it's their responsibility. I try to set up my classroom in a way that they know where all of the

supplies are. If they need something, they don't ask me but go and get it. If we had a classroom system that wasn't working (there was an issue with our 6 classroom chromebooks) I had a set of students figure out where they could set them up and it would be more manageable. I asked their feedback about how we could make chromebook usage more fair for everyone. They came up with some great ideas, I saw what was important to them, and I watched them learn to be more independent and take care of things. The same was true for checking off root work (which was completion), passing back papers etc. If my students could do it, I had them do it. It saved me so much time and energy. Sometimes it wasn't quite what I wanted (like cutting out some game pieces for a science lesson), but usually in those cases it really didn't matter and I just had to lay my perfectionism aside." -Rachelle Tolman

- "Be organized! Have a place for everything, and have everything in its place. Not only will it save your sanity (where is that math test, did I send those notes home, my meeting paperwork is somewhere) but will cut down on those micro-minutes that kids seem to take advantage of." -Charity Lawrence, 3rd Grade
- "Be flexible. Do what you can, that's all you can do." Vicki Quisenberry, Special Education
- "Spend time preparing for the next week so when you show up on Monday you are not frantic." -Anonymous
- "Stay on top of planning, once you fall behind it's twice as hard to catch up!" -Anonymous
- "Use your parent volunteers!!!" -Anonymous
- "Let students be responsible for the little tasks....I found I needed to be 'in control' of everything; then I finally started to let the students take control of some tasks in the classroom that helped free me up to work with individual students. They love the responsibility and I love the extra couple of minutes." -Amy Hinds, Grade 4
- "Let some of the control of certain things fall to the students (being responsible for cleaning up, keeping areas clean, marking off homework, filling out behavior forms)." Kimberly McGann, 3rd Grade

Being intentional about building these 8 habits for teachers that want to use their time efficiently might help.

Back to School Teacher Tips for Grading

These are actually time management tips for grading, but since so many teachers shared tips for grading it became its own section! It is easy to drown yourself in a pile of papers to be graded, so thinking about how you will handle grading papers ahead of time can save your sanity later.

Several teachers explained how **grading with rubrics can be a time saver while also providing beneficial feedback**, while others emphasized that you don't have to grade everything!

- "1) Be selective about what you grade and give feedback on, as it can be overwhelming. 2) Checking off work or homework daily keeps the task small. (Consider it as a student job.)" -Erin Peterson, 2nd
- "Don't let the grading pile up. It just gets overwhelming and your feedback and ability to change up your teaching gets too far delayed to make a difference." -Nicole, 4
- "Don't grade everything. I grade tests and I try to give feedback/grades on writing frequently. Other than that I either have students self check, partner check or use whiteboards so I can do a quick check before they erase and start over." -Kimberly Duarte, Grades 3 and 4
- "Remember you don't have to grade everything that students turn in. Wait for exit slips and observational ratings." -Anonymous
- "Make grading simple - use codes, have students self grade, use written feedback instead of marks..most importantly, don't grade everything and don't be a worksheet giver!" -Anonymous
- "Determine a 'best' time to regularly grade papers and stick to it!" -Gail Wentworth, Fourth grade

- "Grade work together as a class. Give students a chance to mark answers wrong on their own paper and if they change their answer to the correct answer, give them a bonus point. (After you review all answer choices and talk about why each answer was correct/incorrect.)" -Anonymous
- "Grade each essay only on the writing skill you're currently teaching (conventions, focus, organization, etc.) Use a rubric to grade this skill. When reading the essays, I stayed focused on the criteria listed on the rubric and circled the appropriate levels. All that was left to do at that point was leave feedback comments." - Anonymous
- "For homework, have students check their own as part of morning work, noting what they missed and why. Then turn to a partner and discuss what they missed. Not everything has to be graded by me. As long as students are learning, this is a goal I need to keep in mind at all times." -Robin Sneed, 4th Grade
- "Don't wait...put in assignments and grades as soon as you can. Find a system that works for you...maybe it's taking 5 minutes during lunch or staying 5 minutes after school to plug in grades, write emails, or update assignments. You'll feel better knowing that it won't be building up and your students' parents will feel better too seeing upcoming assignments and grades." -Anonymous
- "Remember that positive feedback gives courage to keep trying and constructive feedback provides students with goals." -ML Voelz, 6th grade

Parent Communication Tips

Your relationships with parents can have a huge effect on your school year. Below, teachers give tips for effective parent communication. You will see a common theme - most of the teachers emphasized the importance of informing parents of positive student behaviors (not just negative), and of building relationships with parents early on!

- "Start early! Fill your parent bank with lots of deposits before trying to make any withdrawals!" -Anonymous
- "Contact parents with a positive thought within the first couple of weeks. Keep parents informed." -Anonymous
- "Start early, make positive phone calls starting the first week of school." -Kevée Darts, 3rd grade ELA
- "Call parents for positive reasons not just negative." -Anonymous
- "Have open communication with parents on a daily basis. It allows for a smooth school year with little to no questions. I keep my parents updated on all the happenings in my classroom; especially academically and leave zero surprises! I have been thanked countless times for this." -Anonymous
- "Don't take student behavior or a parent misunderstanding personally." -Anonymous
- "Put in place a system of communicating both good and bad behaviors. Not just bad." -Anonymous
- "Call every parent with a positive comment in the first two weeks. It will go a long way toward building rapport." -Anonymous

Teacher Tips for Taking Care of Yourself

If you don't take care of yourself, you will soon be simply trying to survive instead of thriving. Below are some back to school teacher tips for taking good care of yourself throughout the chaos of a school year!

- "Use a journal and every day write one positive thing that happened." -Anonymous
- "Take a breath, then persist with what you CAN do and release what is out of your control. You cannot fight EVERY battle." -Anonymous
- "Take care of yourself so you can better take care of your students." -Anonymous
- "Show grace. To yourself and others. When you fail, use it as an opportunity to learn and grow, and move on." -Anonymous
- "Always stay positive and keep trying. Lean on each other when our jobs seem to frustrate us." -Anonymous
- "When possible, collaborate regularly with a peer. Keep each other accountable when necessary. Support through challenges and celebrate successes. It is also important to have someone with whom you can confidentially vent. But....stay focused and positive!" -Anonymous
- "Every day is a new beginning. If the previous day was horrible, you will get a fresh, new start the next day!" -Anonymous
- "While it's nice to get ideas from others, don't judge yourself on how others teach." -Anonymous
- "Don't be so hard on yourself, breathe, and ask for help." -Anonymous
- "Do not hesitate to lean on your colleagues for advice and encouragement. It builds good professional relationships and collaboration benefits everyone involved. This includes our students!" -Tina, Grade 5
- "I just finished my first year of teaching and the best advice I can offer is to make a teacher friend at school. Without someone who you can freely talk to about the good, the bad, and everything else, the school year will be really hard. Students need a support system, but so do teachers." -Anonymous

Other Back to School Teaching Tips

These tips for 3rd grade, 4th grade, and 5th grade teachers didn't fit very well into one of the sections above, but they were too good not to include!

- "Enjoy your job and your children. I have found that when I become stressed with demands put on teachers from those not in the classrooms, I become stressed and begin to lose the joy of teaching. I have to make sure that my top priority is my children and what is best for them. That changes each year because your students are not the same each year. You can't teach your children as if they are all the same because they have different

needs. When I remember who I am really in the classroom for, I can begin to enjoy my job and my children more." -Anonymous

- "I attended a conference last year and they talked about how our minds grow when we struggle and build connections when we make mistakes. Mistakes are part of the learning process. We expect students to learn from them and move on, continuously learning. I think as teachers we are the same, continuously growing and learning. Believe in yourself, forgive yourself when you make a mistake and keep improving yourself every day." -Machenzie - 5th grade
- "Find the teacher at your school that is calmly and quietly rocking it and learn from them. Big and flashy is great sometimes but really dig into learning from those veteran teachers that have figured out how to make a difference for kids without burning themselves out." -Anonymous
- "Each day should be a reset for your students and for you. If you're having a rough day, remember tomorrow has the opportunity to be better." -Anonymous 3rd
- "Enjoy it! This job can be really fun if we let it be." -Stephanie Keller, 5th

Registration Open for Mass Literacy Overview Course:

The Department is offering a Mass Literacy Online Overview Course, an asynchronous course to help educators learn about the resources within the [Mass Literacy Guide](#), a source for practical, effective teaching strategies and tools to support evidence-based literacy practices for ALL students in preK-3.

The course is available at **no cost** to any educator who works in a Massachusetts education organization. Participants who complete the course will receive 15 professional development points (PDPs) and can expect to learn about topics such as teaching literacy using evidence-based instructional practices, using a valid and reliable early literacy universal screening assessment, and creating routines for data-based decision making. More information is available on the [course website](#).