

The First Six Weeks of School

This is a critically important time period, which will set up the success of my classroom. The students and I will form meaningful relationships which will allow us to work as a team throughout our year together. The students will build relationships with each other, creating a physically and psychologically safe environment. I will set high expectations for both academics and behavior. Essential classroom routines and procedures will be established. Success at each of these stages will increase student engagement and reduce future behavioral issues. Dedicating my attention to this time period is pivotal to a successful school year.

Before Day One

- Set classroom furniture in an inviting, organized way; providing for collaboration and concentration
- Label all supplies and tools; place them for student's independent use
- Contact families (by or before meet and greet) and request a photo of the family for our family wall; include a questionnaire to help me know more about each student before the first day of school
- Provide families with information on how they can reach out to me and what to expect for weekly communication; reinforce that we will be working together as a team
- Memorize all names and clarify how to pronounce them to make children feel seen and known
- Review student records and talk to previous year's teachers to learn more about each student

Day One Goals

- Feel a sense of belonging and significance throughout the day - Welcome each child by name as they arrive in the classroom - Have name tents on tables to eliminate anxiety about where to sit - Start the morning with a simple share like favorite color - Share what they can expect today
- Learn and practice a few key routines - Introduce the signal that lets students know information is coming (ex: chime) - Practice assembling on circle - Practice getting into a line and tour the classroom/school - Introduce where to keep personal belongings - Practice lunch, snack and recess routines
- Start to learn classmates' names - Have the students practice a group share where they greet the person next to them by name - Change sitting groups throughout the day and have them take their name tents with them
- Experience a sense of excitement and competence about the academic work and learning ahead - Share what a typical day looks like in this new grade - Share that you are confident that this is a successful group of students - Use words like "scientists", "writers", "readers", "mathematicians" to describe students - Provide an activity to promote sense of capability - Notice wanted behaviors and acknowledge them

Week One Goals

- Experience a collaborative and inclusive learning environment - Be sure all students have opportunities to share their ideas - Assign lunch buddies, changing them daily
- Make personal connections - Make opportunities to speak to each child individually or in small groups - Introduce a getting to know you writing activity - Include a share in each morning meeting - Have students tell about the family photos on our family wall - Use activities like “would you rather” to learn more about each other
- Practice academic routines - Post times for each lesson on the schedule and announce it each morning - Have students practice collecting, passing out, and turning in work - Introduce students to what they can choose when work is finished
- Explore some key academic supplies - Show where school tools are kept and how they are to be used - Have students practice getting books from the classroom library - Discuss how we can respect and maintain our classroom environment
- Generate learning goals - Discuss “I can” statements - Identify some key targets for the whole class - Have the students make a list of things they hope to learn or ways they hope to grow
- Collectively develop classroom norms - Create a document with the students about our ways of learning together, including how we can be a strong community - All norms should fall under the categories safe, respectful and productive - Discuss what these norms look and sound like

Week Two Goals

- Continue to build connections with all classmates - Continue morning shares - Make time to work with small groups and use this opportunity to strengthen the bond with those students - Have students work in pairs to solidify their relationships
- Have opportunities to practice and polish routines - Instead of announcing the schedule, reference its location for students to check - Ask students where things belong and have them inform the class of what to do next - Practice lining up, walking in the hall, getting to morning meeting, and all other transition times
- Experience more academic choices - Check out books from our classroom library - Offer math challenges/puzzles for fast finishers - Introduce social studies and science
- Gain more confidence in speaking and strengthen listening skills - Begin classroom discussions and talk about appropriate ways to respond (agree, disagree, connect, add on) - Have students explain their math reasoning thinking - Continue morning shares
- Work together to finalize the classroom rules - Now that we’ve been together longer, add to the current classroom norms - Have students talk about what helps them focus and concentrate - Discuss why these rules help us be a successful community of learners

Week Three Goals

- Continue to build stamina in all content areas - Lengthen the learning time and the subsequent practice period - Utilize less brain breaks to allow more time for focused work - Begin more challenging work

- Continue to practice routines - Reference schedule by reminding where it can be found - Have students attempt to line up or come to morning meeting with less adult support - Offer gentle reminders to meet expectations
- Experience classroom norms coming to life in the classroom - Identify when a norm is occurring and state why it's helpful - Recognize students following the classroom norms - Continue to state expectations as reminders - Highlight great moments at our closing meeting
- Learn about logical consequences - State the natural consequence when discussing an action (Since the computer wasn't returned to the charger, it's not ready for you today)

Weeks Four Through Six Goals

- Assess the current state of the classroom community to ensure that students are fully engaged academically and are becoming self-sufficient
- Ensure that all students feel physically and psychologically safe in the environment
- Guarantee that I have formed a working relationship with every student and their family
- Be sure that every student has formed a bond with at least one other classmate