PREPARING FOR THE FIRST WEEKS OF SCHOOL

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Agenda

• Rationale
• Prepare the Classroom
• Prepare the Students
• Classroom Management
• Maximize Academic Learning Time
• Engage the School Community
• What Teachers Should Strive to Accomplish During the First Three Weeks
Why Prepare for the First Weeks?

- Create a plan that addresses how the classroom will function and how students should interact with the teacher and fellow classmates.
- Establish authority, systems, procedures, and expectations.
- Promote a positive classroom culture.
- Clarify rules, consequences, rewards, and incentives.
- Ensure that the class runs smoothly for the rest of the year.

Carefully planning classroom management strategies such as procedures and expectations makes the start of a new year easier for new teachers and students.
Prepare the Classroom
Before you move a single desk, consider the following:

- A climate of work is what you want to establish during the first week of school.
- The first week of school should stress large group organization and student procedures.
- Do not over-arrange or over-decorate your room for the opening of school.

Make sure to visit your classroom a month before school starts and take an inventory of what you have, what you don’t have and what you may need.
Prepare the floor space

- Find the optimal way to work with the furniture that’s been supplied in the room.
- Begin the year with the desks in rows facing the teacher. This will allow you to minimize distractions and monitor behavior more readily.
Choose a seating plan that builds on your strengths as a teacher

What teaching methodologies do you plan to use?

What types of assignments and tasks do you expect students to do?

What is the optimum placement of seating for students to see the screen, board, or teacher?

Do you have a lesson plan for teaching your students how to move their desks and then how to put them back in their original spots?

How many students in your classroom need some type of preferential seating to meet special learning needs?
Prepare the classroom

Prepare the Student Area
- Plan areas for students’ belongings.

Prepare the Teacher Area
- Maximize your proximity to students and frequently used materials.
- Ensure that the teacher’s desk, file cabinets, and other equipment do not interfere with the flow of traffic.
Prepare the teaching materials

- Have your basic materials ready for the first week of school.
- Ensure that you have enough materials for students who will need extra basic school supplies.
- Store seldom-used materials out of the way, but be sure they are inventoried and ready for immediate use.
Prepare the Students
Remember the 3 R’s

Routines: Desired patterns of behavior and the foundation of effective instruction

Rubrics: Used for evaluation and provide a specific definition of quality

Rules: Stated expectations or standards for behavior

“The more consistently you teach your students the routines, rubrics, and rules (3Rs) of your classroom at the beginning of the school year (3 weeks), the more productive the rest of your year (33 weeks) will be.”

Elaine K. Mc Ewan, How to Survive and Thrive in the First Three Weeks of School
Classroom routines

**Organizational Routines**: Help you manage the movement of students and paperwork in efficient ways.

**Academic Routines**: Include both the teaching moves you routinely make and the learning procedures your students employ that ensure success for all.

**Social Routines**: Behavioral patterns that keep interpersonal communications and relations in the classroom on a positive and productive note.
Use rubrics for students

## Rubric for Participation in Class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Frequency</strong></td>
<td>Too frequent responses: dominates discussion, not allowing students (or sometimes even teacher) to contribute or is silent or creates distractions by playing with items.</td>
<td>Comments occasionally or a bit too much or at times that break the flow of the discussion. Sometimes talks over others.</td>
<td>Contributes regularly to discussions, and allows others their turns to share their comments as well.</td>
<td>Frequency of comments is optimal (just right: neither too frequent so as to dominate, nor so little that there is no contribution). Steps in when there are silences to move discussion along but keeps quiet when this allows others to contribute. Sensitive to when to comment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relevance</strong></td>
<td>Comments are not related to topic at hand, or go back to previous part of discussion or question. Language is so general or confused that it’s difficult to understand where comment fits.</td>
<td>Comments may only repeat what has been already said, or may be tangential or may sidetrack discussion from time to time. Language is fairly general; only personal experience has some specific details.</td>
<td>Contributions are related to the topic and some support is provided, at least in general ways, to make connections between the topic and the students’ comments. Clarification questions are asked. Language is clear, if somewhat general, and specific details are provided.</td>
<td>Contributions enhance lesson or discussion: they may ask a key question, elaborate, bring in relevant personal knowledge, move the discussion along, identify issues or take the discussion to another level. Students use the vocabulary of the topic to be precise and clear. Able to synthesize or indicate gaps or extensions to topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Growth of School Community</strong></td>
<td>Comments may focus attention on self rather than on discussion. Comments may frequently interrupt others or be disrespectful. Side conversations, body language or actions, inappropriate comments or sounds may make class participation fragmented.</td>
<td>Listens intermittently as others speak, so comments are sometimes off topic or don’t follow thread of discussion. Comments and body language sometimes respectful. Sometimes follows the lead of others to disrupt participation. (Eye contact made intermittently if culturally appropriate.)</td>
<td>Listens as others contribute. Comments acknowledge others’ contributions. Student both asks and answers questions in discussion. Comments and body language are generally respectful. (Eye contact made if culturally appropriate.)</td>
<td>Listens actively and attentively to others prior to making own comments. Comments focus on and enhance consideration of topic rather than focusing on specific people. Comments and body language validate and encourage others’ contributions. (Eye contact and nodding as culturally appropriate.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comments: Items to consider in language use: ask questions, answer questions, take turns, give directions, elaborate on a topic

*Regina Public Schools, October 1, 2003*
Use rubrics for you

### Teacher Self-Assessment Rubric

Use this rubric to help evaluate how well you communicate with families. Think about where you see yourself in the process and strategies you use to improve communication by marking the box that most clearly matches what you are doing now.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IMPROVING COMMUNICATION</th>
<th>ELEMENT</th>
<th>BEGINNING</th>
<th>DEVELOPING</th>
<th>PROFICIENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Communication with families includes one-way and two-way communication processes. | I am not aware of strategies for two-way communication. I communicate with families primarily through one-way communication such as memos, newsletters and sign-off sheets. | I am aware of strategies for one-way and two-way communication. I make an effort to communicate with families. I ask for parent input to enhance instruction and I avoid educational jargon. | I actively seek opportunities for one-way and two-way communication by integrating the following activities: 
   - I create a welcoming and safe environment where parents feel comfortable to discuss issues of concern.
   - I use different forms of communication (e-mail, chapter house/community meeting presentations, newsletters, telephone, weekly folders, home visits, surveys, public service announcements, newspaper ads).
   - I ask for parent input to enhance instruction.
   - I avoid educational jargon.
   - I encourage immediate contact between home and school when issues (positive and negative) arise. |
| Communication is varied and honors family differences, individual needs and cultural preferences. | I have limited knowledge of the varied communications styles of the families served at the school. I seldom consider linguistic and cultural preferences of families when communicating with them. | I use a variety of strategies that are sensitive to the needs of diverse families. I make an effort to honor family differences, individual needs and cultural preferences when communicating and interacting with families. | I actively build my knowledge of families’ cultural differences, individual needs and preferences by integrating the following strategies: 
   - I encourage parents to share information such as student strengths and learning preferences.
   - I survey families, ask pertinent questions and utilize information I have gathered.
   - I provide information in native languages as appropriate.
   - I make connections to students’ cultures and solicit ideas from families. |
A few questions regarding rules

Will you adopt a popular discipline model or design a behavior plan that combines the strengths of several different models?

How many rules do you need?

Will your rules be conceptual or behavioral?

Will you decide what the rules are, will you develop them collaboratively with your students, or will you do a combination of both?
Pros and Cons

Developing Rules on Your Own

**Pro:** You illustrate your control over the classroom and the decision making process.

**Con:** Students may feel alienated and left out of the process.

Collaborative Approach

**Pro:** Students will understand that you value their opinion and will likely not view you as a dictatorial figure.

**Con:** You may find yourself having difficulty agreeing on rules with your students.
How to implement rules, routines and rubrics

1. Explain
2. Direct
3. Guide
4. Model
5. Practice
Classroom Management
Classroom Management

- Refers to all of the things that a teacher does to organize students, space, time, and materials so that student learning can take place.
- How you manage the classroom is the primary determinant of how well your students will learn.
- Effective classroom management practices must begin on the first day of school.

An effective teacher manages their classrooms and an ineffective teacher disciplines their classrooms.

Harry K. Wong & Rosemary T. Wong, The First Days of School
The most important thing a teacher can provide in the classroom during the first week of school is **CONSISTENCY**.

Harry K. Wong & Rosemary T. Wong, *The First Days of School*
Strategies for promoting positive behavior

Focus on instruction immediately after class begins.

Familiarize yourself with the lesson plan for the day.

Introduce what you want students to do and understand.

Use your strengths/skills to motivate students.

Be positive and encouraging.

Walk around the classroom to assess students’ understanding and provide support.
Maximize Learning Time
Time-savers for every teacher

Stick to the agenda

Establish the daily planner habit

Give spoken and written instructions
Attention getters for off-task students

Be Gentle
- If appropriate, gently touch the student on the shoulder or tap your finger slightly on the student’s desk or book to focus attention, whisper a reminder in a student’s ear, or ask if help is needed.

Pop the Question
- Direct a question to the particular section of the room where the student is seated or to a student near the disengaged student.

Give a Deadline
- Call attention to the time remaining and then set a timer.

Change Locations
- Invite the students who are off task to move to a more comfortable, less distracting location and gently reengage them in their work.
Attention getters for whole-group discussions

- Use proximity
- Show and tell
- Break it up
- Vary your voice
- Identify target students
- Ask, “Could it be me?”
Engage the School Community
Tips for the first week of school

- Introduce yourself to all school staff including guidance counselors, front desk staff, parent coordinator, custodians, etc.
- Contact parents/families with a phone call or introductory letter
- Greet students and families outside school grounds before or after school
- Plan to have lunch with fellow teachers
What Teachers Should Strive to Accomplish During the First Three Weeks
Goals for Week 1

- Initiate class introductions and provide overview of the class.
- Establish Rules, Routines, and Rubrics.
- Begin to experiment with the arrangement of desks in the classroom.
- Prepare the teacher area for the school year.
- Institute how to post assignments and where to post the daily agenda.
- Establish a discipline plan.
- Begin the development of your default seating plan.
- Give out the first assignment.
Goals for Week 2

- Rules, Routines, and Rubrics should all be increasingly understood by the class, but be prepared to clarify any misunderstandings with explanation and modeling.
- Explain the consequences of breaking rules to the class.
- Begin to focus more on your content lessons.
- Finalize desk arrangement.
- Implement the default seating plan from Week 1.
- Collect and distribute assignments on a more regular basis.
- Start keeping track of students on a daily basis using a grade record book.
Goals for Week 3

- Rules, Routines, and Rubrics should be solidified in the classroom.
- Discipline Plan should be fully implemented.
- Modify seating plan if necessary.
- Desk arrangement should remain fairly consistent from here on out.
- Start preparing students for quizzes and exams.
 References and Resources


QUESTIONS?
THANK YOU!

For more information, visit us on the web and follow us on Facebook and Twitter!

> Visit teachnyc.net for detailed information and short videos about salary, benefits, and fingerprinting
> Visit nysed.gov for detailed information about New York State Certification, and to open an account in the online TEACH system
> Visit uft.org to learn more about the United Federation of Teachers