New Teacher's Handbook

What All New Teachers Need to Know

Gary M. Garfield

GOOD YEAR BOOKS

Dedication and Acknowledgments

A special thank you to the teachers who have shared their ideas and ideals with me over the years, and to those who continue to make a difference in the lives they touch.

To my students who enter this worthy profession full of caring, passion, and love.

Thank you to Pam, Andrea, and Marissa

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Cover design: Gary D. Smith, Performance Design
Cover photo of apple: ©AlexStar, courtesy of stockxpert.com
Text design: Doug Goewey
Interior illustrations: Rebecca Havecost

ISBN-13: 978-1-59647-285-3

Previous ISBN: 0-673-58905-6

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Introduction

Teaching is passion, teaching is joy, and teaching is sorrow. Teaching is the magic dust that we scatter around our classrooms to turn the mundane into magic and the static into sensation. Teaching is love.

New Teacher's Handbook is meant to simplify and demystify the art and science of teaching. Our objective is to be authentic and relevant, and to introduce tested approaches for the new teacher so that a solid foundation can be established. From this foundation will rise the teachers who will make a positive difference in the lives of the children they teach. We share both experience and ideas to help make your classroom not only a place of great organization, but also a place of unique culture and life, a living place with lots of smiles, bright faces, and the marvel of questions being asked and answered. The classroom can and should be a most wonderful place.

Unlike other teacher training texts, *New Teacher's Handbook* contains all the "little things" that are important to the new teacher. We hope the following pages will answer your questions, validate your desires, and offer meaningful inquiry to your curiosity. Most importantly, we want to assist you in being the best teacher you can be and in making your classroom the greatest place for children to live and learn.

What Teachers Need to Know for Their First Year

When friends learn of your desire to enter the teaching profession, they may speak in a sympathetic fashion in words that may sound like this: "How nice. I'm sure you'll make a very good teacher." Others may respond more directly with, "My goodness, you are serious about this. You must be crazy!" Maybe so,

but if the desire to teach is in your soul, just smile and say, "You could be right, but I'm going to be a great teacher." Here are some of the most common reasons people give for wanting to teach:

- ***Since I was six years old, I always wanted to teach. I would imagine myself in front of a room of children.***
- ***I always played school when I was young. I even made lessons and practiced teaching with my dolls and stuffed animals.***
- ***I love children and think teaching would be great for me.***
- ***I was laid off work at an aerospace firm and needed a job. Teaching seemed like a natural.***
- ***I love science and thought I could share this excitement with others.***
- ***I worked in industry for many years but I always wanted to teach. Now I can afford to do it.***
- ***I don't know what else to do.***
- ***I always liked school and I thought this was something I would enjoy and do well.***
- ***I am the fourth generation of teachers and everyone expects me to be a teacher.***
- ***I can assert the greatest political, social, and economic change through my work in the classroom.***

Clearly, individuals have their own reasons for choosing teaching as a first or (in many cases) second career. Although each reason is valid to that individual, some should perhaps be viewed with caution. Teach because you think you will be exemplary and will contribute something truly meaningful to your constituents, our students. Teach because something comes alive inside of you that says ***I can and will make a difference in the lives of the children.*** Teach if you feel in your heart the passion and love for this act of sharing. And, of course, teach if you are a professional who will be an agent for change in society as we enter a new century.

If you are considering teaching for some other reason, talk about it, seek advice, and be sure this will be good for you. Imagine yourself in front of your class, and imagine what you see and feel. Imagine what your students will see. Are you happy in this vision? Are your students happy? Look deep within yourself, continue to assess your choice, see your future in the classroom; only then will you know if and why you want to teach.

Chapter 1

Culture of the School

Will I fit in?

The school in which you are now an integral part should be a place of openness, sharing, and caring. Your classroom should also be a focal point for what is new and good in education, a place of renewed energy and hope as well as an arena to model new ideas. ***Be personally open to new ideas, seek resources from your colleagues, and share whatever you learn, however you learn it.*** You will find many knowledgeable professionals at your school who can offer you practical, quality ideas for greater teaching effectiveness. Seek these people out, ask them for help, and offer the same in return. It is then that you will be able to sort through all of the well-meaning ideas, time-savers, activities, and procedures, picking and choosing those that seem to be consistent with what you wish to accomplish. Borrowing and sharing creates a climate for positive change.

Helpful and Not-so-helpful Faculty

As a new teacher, you will be offered advice, assistance, and loving care from those faculty members who really want to help. Most of the time they are sincere. Your colleagues have a wealth of ideas and experience and it is yours for the asking. When they invite you to their classrooms, look around, absorb as much as you can, and compliment them by asking if it is all right to borrow some of their ideas. Everyone will benefit. With some luck, your colleagues will also share what is in their cupboards and drawers.

> ✦ *Playing it safe by teaching from the book, and handing out lots of worksheets is dangerous to you and to the educational health of the children.*

In other instances, you may feel unwelcome, or experience a condescending tone. Don't take it to heart. For some teachers, you are a reflection of the time when they were beginning teachers and full of enthusiasm. What they now see is where they are today, and some don't like what they see. So, rather than admit how they have changed, these teachers choose instead to denigrate the beginning teachers. Don't fall prey to negative remarks and certainly don't agree with anything negative that teachers may say. You can smile and keep on doing what you think is right and good for your children.

Playing it safe by teaching from the book, and handing out lots of worksheets is dangerous to you and to the educational health of the children. During this first year, take some risks. Try new delivery systems with your curriculum, have your students participate in projects that are exciting and, if your district permits it and you want to, call the media to report projects to the community—do something related to social action to make a difference. You and your children will be rewarded again and again year after year. You don't want to be the same as every other teacher at every other school, and neither do your students. It's just like taking a magic carpet ride, and you're right up in front.

The Lunchroom

It's your first day teaching, and the primary teachers have lunch at 11:15. Where should you sit? Who do you sit with? What is the right thing to say? On that first day, ask one of your grade-level colleagues if you can walk to the lunchroom together. That solves that problem. When in Rome, do as the Romans do.

✦ *You are being called to the front of the class to be an effective teacher, one who will change lives.*

Come Friday, it may be "Treat Day," and this is when the cakes and cookies and other goodies are loaded on the table and the feast begins. Volunteer to be on one of the first Friday Treat teams and make one of your best. You'll be an instant hero or heroine, and membership in the "club" is assured. Don't buy a dozen donuts and fling them down on the table. At the very least, bake some brownies and sprinkle some powdered sugar over the top.

As for being in the "club," acceptance means the right to say whatever you want. This comes after at least a few months of being a teacher. As a beginning teacher, if you become known as the "loud know-it-all," your membership will be delayed, if not outright withheld. Be a part of the group, participate, enjoy your colleagues, contribute, but don't act like you own the place. Be just a bit humble those first weeks.

Talking about students in the lunchroom is a bad practice for several reasons. First, talking negatively about children hurts them, perpetuates a self-fulfilling prophecy, and makes the teacher appear less than sensitive. Jokes about children are mean-spirited and inappropriate, and no child should be the source of negative amusement for the faculty. Another concern is that nonteacher personnel or volunteer parents may overhear the conversation. The negative comments you make may not remain restricted to the teachers' sanctuary.

Participate in the lunchroom ritual at least a few times a week. Although you may have a great deal of planning and other classroom chores to accomplish during that forty-minute

lunch reprieve, spend some of that time with your colleagues interacting, sharing who you are, and simply being social. It's fun, and you may need a "mind break" as well.

I'll Do It!—Volunteering

At the first faculty meeting, or before, you will be asked to sign up for a variety of school committees: social, library, (a very important committee), special task force, curriculum, and a host of other committees related to almost every subject area and school life. Volunteer! ***Here is a great opportunity to become involved in decision making at the school.*** It's also an excellent opportunity to meet and work with your colleagues, learn about the workings of the school, and, of course, have an immediate influence on the affairs that impact students, teachers, and the community. In addition, your willingness to volunteer serves as a positive showcase for your collegiality, cooperation, commitment, and leadership.

A Cautionary Note: Be sure that in your eagerness to participate, you keep in mind the extra work that committees entail. Try not to overcommit so that you can allocate sufficient time for your preparation and teaching responsibilities.

Chapter 2

Organization and Planning Before the Doors Open

How can my classroom become a place of energy, excitement, and community?

This is Your Classroom

After you accept your position, the principal or administrative designee walks you to your new room, unlocks the door, and ushers you into a vast, lifeless container. This is a traditional classroom. However, more and more new teachers are finding themselves (at least for the first year) in less-than-traditional classroom spaces. You may be ushered into the foyer of the auditorium or a corner of the cafeteria. You could be assigned to the library or a large storage room. Your guide will say, "Well, this is your classroom." Just smile and say, "Oh great, this is nice. I can do it."

With class reductions in many states, classrooms are in short supply and teachers and students are making do with what they have. You will have to view this as a temporary adventure and design your instructional area based on what you want to happen, and, of course, considering the traffic flow or the height of the stage! ***Whatever happens, maintain a good attitude and demonstrate that you have what it takes.*** This inconvenience shall pass, and someday it will be a great story.

Setting Up the Room

No matter where it is, your classroom is the place where you will spend many of your waking hours. It is the place where you and your students will live and learn five days a week, ten months a year. It is important that it be a place that is good for ***both*** of you.

Look at the room as a place that reflects your philosophy and teaching style and think about how that translates to working with children. For example, you may be a child-centered teacher or you may be teacher-directed. You may be an advocate of cooperative learning or of the practice of inquiry. You may be a

fundamentalist. ***Your classroom should reflect your teaching philosophies.***

When visitors step into a classroom, they can look at the faces of the children and have an immediate barometer as to the emotional climate. They can "feel" the place and the energy, or lack thereof, as they scan the room with their eyes. When the environment is good, it is so good! When it is lacking, it doesn't ***feel*** good to the students or the teacher.

Some of what you do in your classroom can be decided before the children arrive. Other parts of the environment you can encourage your students to create. For example, prior to the beginning of school, you can organize bulletin boards that may have a generic base, such as a calendar, job chart, list of classroom management procedures, schedule, and motivation boards for different subject areas. After the first day (see "The first day" and "The first week"), you can gradually post students' ideas, work in progress, writing, artwork, science, and so on. If your students are interested in roller-blading, swimming, or soccer, you might have posters or photos related to these topics. Take photographs of your students working and post them in an attractive display. Suddenly, your classroom will be alive with the color and excitement of the real world. It will become a place where children want to be, feel comfortable, and excel.

The classroom is a vehicle for you to accomplish your objectives. If social interaction, cooperative learning, or group decision-making is one of your objectives, it will be reflected in the organization of the physical environment. If your students are going to work independently, using computers or other classroom resources, your classroom might take on another look. Some samples of various classroom setups are shown in the charts on pages 115–117.

If you are a teacher who presents or directs, minimizes social interaction, and maximizes structured academic assignments, you may feel more comfortable in another type of setup.

> ✦ *Look at the room as a place that reflects your philosophy and teaching style and think about how that translates to working with children.*

You can design an environment that intuitively feels right. If the classroom setup doesn't work, rearrange it and try another model. Remember that classrooms, like children, grow, evolve, and change. As a new teacher, it helps to be flexible and to allow the classroom environment to adjust to these normal and interesting changes.

Note: The classroom designs provided in this handbook are suggestions to assist the beginning teacher. If you have your own idea or a room layout that makes sense, by all means implement it. You'll know quickly enough whether it is successful.

Chapter 3

Lessons and Units: The Essentials of Planning

How will I be able to plan effective lessons and units?

Making Teaching and Learning Memorable

Our memories of elementary school are often the most accurate indicators of its success. For many years, I have asked new classes of teacher candidates, conference attendees, and workshop participants to candidly recount a particularly positive and memorable learning episode or lesson that occurred in their early school years. Only five to ten percent were able to recall one positive learning episode. That means that a startling 90 to 95 percent of the group can't remember a great instructional activity that occurred during grade school. Three of those who could recall such a memorable event responded with the following comments:

- ***I remember that we learned about the pioneers, read stories, dressed in costume, and acted out what life on the prairie must have been like.***
- ***I recall making a relief map out of salt, water, and flour.***
- ***Two of us assembled a California mission and a miniature Native American village. I can still remember the research we did.***

Others talk about their vivid memories of skits, cooking, dancing, singing, or painting as a part of an integrated curriculum. These students can often recall what they were wearing, the color of their shoes, the fragrances in the classroom, and other details associated with the event, even when it may have occurred some fifteen to twenty years earlier.

What is the common element of all of these remembered experiences? Simply stated, all of these activities were experiential or "hands-on," multimodal learning. Such learning engages the student, utilizing visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning modalities. We all learn through these modalities. Thus, the type of memorable learning episodes so clearly described by students nearly always possesses these multimodal characteristics.

I have never heard a student say, "That was really an exciting social studies worksheet," or "I remember these really great questions that came at the end of the chapter."

For the beginning teacher, the message is clear. ***What you do in your instruction must engage the students and should appeal to the learning modalities of each learner.*** It should be exciting! If you accomplish this both in the planning of your lesson content and through active instruction, you will give your students a strong basis from which to develop.

Thematic, Integrated Curriculum

Thematic teaching is a powerful tool for engaging and exciting your students about learning. What is thematic teaching? Simply put, it is the organization of subject areas around a central curriculum theme. Can we teach everything we need in this fashion? Probably not, but it is a wonderful vehicle for connecting the disciplines in a way that makes sense and has lasting impact. For example, when we study westward expansion, the first thing that often comes to mind is the vision of a Conestoga wagon rolling along the dry prairie. With this image, we remember a few dates and events, but little else.

Thematic teaching brings a rich combination of social studies, science, art, music, literature, and even math to the study of westward expansion. The learner who has experienced westward expansion thematically will see the prairie schooner, hear the music of the many cultures of the American West, construct quilts, sand paint, identify plants used for food, read journals, engage in literature, myths, and legends, and explore the geography of the region. Students will experience the tapestry of the many aspects of life as though they were travelling west in the mid-1850s. Learning becomes a personal, engaging, and memorable event.

Planning for Effective Teaching and Learning

Why do teachers plan? Effective teachers plan because this is the best way to maximize the time and energy used in the classroom. As a teacher, you have a finite number of hours in the instructional day, week, and year, so it becomes of paramount importance to enhance students' experience and learning.

What are the elements of an effective lesson? You, as the teacher, determine the objectives for the lesson based on your students' needs and the required standards and/or curriculum. You allocate time, materials, and labor to the task. You implement specific procedures to accomplish the stated objectives. You check many times throughout the lesson for understanding and application and make modifications and/or adjustments as you move along. When the lesson is complete, you look back to ensure that the objectives have been met and student learning has occurred.

Effective lesson planning is not a mystery and is not difficult to successfully implement. If you

are conscientious and view lesson planning as a serious activity, it should not present a problem. If you view it logically, and sometimes intuitively, you will appreciate the simplicity of this essential teaching process.

Lesson planning is not a system in which the teacher must conform to a script or to an absolute set of directions or delivery systems. ***Good teachers, regardless of a particular style, seem to utilize strategies that promote excellence, engagement, student interaction, feedback, and a variety of pedogological approaches.*** These same teachers allow students to construct meaning from what they learn.

The following are components, qualities, and/or areas of effective teaching that most successful teachers utilize in one form or another. Your school principal, supervisor, or mentor will understand these terms and will be able to identify them in your teaching and assist you with them in your professional development. ***This next section will guide you through the terminology of the lesson development. A lesson planning template is provided in the Appendix.***

Components for Planning, Teaching, and Learning

Name of lesson, subject, and grade level

Teachers need to be aware of the appropriateness of what they teach. Teachers need to plan lessons and units related to their state framework standards and district curriculum.

Objectives

Every teacher must identify what is to be the learning outcome of the lesson or experience. If the objective is clear, the teacher should have evidence of student learning at the conclusion of the lesson. It's not just about whether the teacher teaches the lesson; it is also about whether the student has learned it. Instructional objectives are observable and/or measurable. An example of such objectives might be:

- ***The learner will be able to describe in writing at least three causes of the Civil War.***
- ***The learner will be able to draw two types of shelters built by the Southwest Native Americans.***
- ***Using paint and paper, students will be able to create an original piece of art.***

Use words that name behaviors, for example, ***state, list, identify, describe, draw, calculate, demonstrate,*** and ***measure.*** Do not use descriptors such as ***will understand, will gain knowledge, will become familiar with,*** and ***will learn.*** These labels lack the specificity of being measurable or observable.

Time and materials

Teachers need to think about the time available and consider adjusting the "regular" schedule to accommodate a lesson. You should not always let the existing schedule drive the lesson. Think about letting the lesson determine the time necessary to meet the objectives. Prepare materials in advance and have them easily accessible at the time of the lesson.

Initial motivation or anticipatory set

Establish an immediate and clear focus and motivation for the lesson. Whether the initial motivation is a question, a bridge from previous learning, or some relevant stimuli, it is critical for getting students' initial attention. To some degree, it is necessary to do this in

every lesson. ***Think about and plan the initial motivation with care.*** Let students know what will be learned (or the approach, if the goal is inquiry). This provides clarity for students as to where you are going with the activity and what they can anticipate. It also enables students to establish and focus on a direction/momentum for learning.

This is an example of initial motivation (bridging from previous learning):

- ***Yesterday, we discussed why the Chinese immigrants came to the United States. Today, we are going to discuss another immigrant group.***

This is an example of an anticipatory set:

- ***How many of you have ever seen an object like this? (The teacher holds up an eight-inch metal spike.) Today we are going to learn about the railroad and what this object did to make building the railroad possible.***

Content presentation, modeling, demonstration, or generating an idea

This component becomes the central activity of the learning episode. This is where the content is presented and concepts are developed. In math, this is where the student learns the operation. In history, this is where the event is learned, discussed, and debated. In art, it is where the instructions for the project are presented and demonstrated. In cooking, it is where the technique and/or specifics of a recipe are demonstrated or presented. Strategies for assisting students toward understanding include:

- ***Teacher or student demonstration***
- ***Instruction, lecture, teacher-led experiments***
- ***Videos, multimedia, guest speakers, interviews, field trips, investigations, and so forth***

These experiences are exciting both for learner and teacher. Prepare this aspect of the lesson in detail in advance and with full knowledge of the content.

Checking for understanding and assessing progress

By asking learners the appropriate questions and assessing activities in progress, you will be able to check for understanding and assess progress. This will be a critical indicator of whether a student is ready to work independently or requires further practice.

Here is an example of an assessment:

Say, ***"Boys and girls, raise your hands if you can tell me one hardship that the pioneers may have encountered on their journey west?"*** Wait until many hands are in the air. This step is to provide information to you about how many of the learners seem to understand what was taught. After the question has been answered, ask another and another, until the content that was taught has been reviewed. Note those children who do not seem to understand, who do not participate, or who are reluctant. Reteach as a part of this review process.

Guided practice

It is crucial to verify that students can perform the new operation or concept in the learning episode and can put theory and/or idea to practice. You can accomplish this by observing students at work, either by themselves or working in small groups. Circulate around the instructional area throughout the session and

notice how each student is doing. This is the final observational step by the teacher before the students go off to work independently.

Closure

Closure wraps up, reviews, and shares the substance of the lesson. This may be accomplished by having students restate what they have learned by inviting them to share a product, or by giving them feedback that relates to the process. Closure may occur after independent practice, if such practice takes place in class, or beforehand, if independent practice is homework. Closure is necessary for ensuring that students understand what they have done and learned.

Independent practice

Reinforce the operation or concept previously taught by giving students independent practice. Have students work alone or in cooperative groups practicing new learning to gain confidence without your direct input.

Assessment related to the achievement of objectives

Were the objectives met? If so, how? If not, why not? In either case, where do you move from here? Did you accomplish what you set out to do in terms of student learning or experience? Plan and implement next learning based upon assessment.

Do I Have to Use the Textbooks?

How many times have teachers said and students heard, "We have to move along, we need to get through the book?" This seems to be one of the great misconceptions of veteran and beginning teachers alike. Don't despair—there are ways to teach what is mandated by the state curriculum guidelines other than just from textbooks!

In most states, the Department of Education or State Board of Education determines what is to be taught at a specific grade level. This is most commonly referred to as standards and/or the "state framework." For each subject, a document has been written that gives a general overview of the topics for each grade level and some suggestions for methods of effective teaching.

Once the state framework is printed, two things occur. The textbook publishers write or rewrite their subject textbooks to conform to the state requirements. Almost simultaneously, school districts will write their curriculum to elaborate on the framework. While state frameworks may be quite general, the curriculum document is very detailed, and includes each of the required instructional objectives for everything that is to be learned.

Now you, the teacher must teach the curriculum. The delivery system is left open to you. If you choose to use only the adopted texts, that's fine. If you choose to use only the textbooks integrated with literature, videos, CDs, the Internet, music, guest speakers, field trips, original lessons, and so forth, that too is quite acceptable. If you decide not to use a textbook, that is allowed, as well. The only requirement is that the curriculum expanded from the state framework be taught (and, one hopes, learned).

Simply stated, ***it is the prudent decision making of the classroom teacher, or grade-level team, that determines what effective teaching delivery systems will be utilized.*** Whatever your choice, you remain accountable for the outcomes.

Sample Lesson Plan

Title of Lesson: The Archaeologist

Grade Level: Fifth grade

Time: One hour

Materials

- *Computer with Internet access*
- *Pencil, crayons, paper, replicas or pictures of artifacts*
- *Photographs of and books about authentic archaeological sites*
- *Internet URLs (addresses)*
- *Video:* Archaeologists at Work

Objectives

1) Students will be able to describe the role of an archaeologist.

2) Students will be able to identify two famous archaeological sites.

Initial Motivation or Anticipatory Set

Example 1. Ask: Can anyone tell me what an archaeologist is?

Example 2. Dress up as an archaeologist (a la Indiana Jones) with various tools and artifacts and ask: Do you have any idea who I am or what I do?

Example 3. Say: Yesterday we studied the young boy King, Tutankhamen. Today we are going to learn about the scientists who discover tombs and other places. (Bridging from the past.)

Example 4. Place several photographs, artifacts, and books related to archaeology on a table. Ask: What do you think all of this is, and why is it here?

Example 5. Say: Today we are going to explore the often exciting life of the archaeologist. In order for us to learn more about the world we live in, we often rely on scientists called archaeologists to help us understand those people and civilizations that came before we did, and even before we had written records.

Content Presentation, Modeling, Demonstration

Ask questions such as:

- *Who knows something about an archaeologist?*
- *Who knows what archaeologists do?*
- *Do you know of any popular movies where an archaeologist is depicted?*
- *Do you think the depiction in these movies is really true?*
- *Is the archaeologist the character who seeks ancient world treasures and enjoys the wild adventures of Indiana Jones? Or is the archaeologist a scientist and teacher who works both in the lab and in the field looking for clues to the past? What do you think?*
- *Archaeologists, using a variety of scientific methods, explore sites (often called "digs") to uncover evidence that tell us much about what happened a long time ago. What archaeologists find are called artifacts. These artifacts may be bits and pieces of pots, lamps, tools, or even human remains.*

Sample Lesson Plan (continued)

Hold up photographs of several dig sites. Display replicas or photographs of artifacts that have been unearthed at miscellaneous digs. Digs or archaeological sites may be in the desert, on mountains, in cities, in rural areas, and even on the ocean floor. Show Internet sites at these various locations, (see URLs listed). Review each of the following sites:

Pyramids of Giza, Egypt:

www.mnsu.edu/emuseum/prehistory/egypt/architecture/gizapyramids.html

The Great Enclosure, Zimbabwe:

www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/zimb/hd_zimb.htm

The Aztecs, Mexico:

www.mnsu.edu/emuseum/cultural/mesoamerica/aztec.html

Play the short video *Archaeologists at Work.*

Checking for Understanding

Ask the following questions, waiting until many hands are raised.

- *Who can tell me what archaeologists do?*
- *How do archaeologists go about their work?*
- *What are they looking for?*
- *What are the objects called that archaeologists find?*
- *Other than in the field, or at the dig site, where else do archaeologists work? Who can tell me some of the archaeological sites on the Internet? In the film? From the books?*

Guided Practice

Example 1. Students, in groups of three, illustrate an archaeological dig site, including the tools, people, and characteristics of the site.

Example 2. Students write a journal entry (as described in class) as though they were archaeologists and had just made a major discovery. They should be sure to include all the relevant information as to time, place, people, nature of the discovery, its significance, and their feelings.

Check to see that the directions are clear and then circulate, offering assistance.

Closure

Ask students to share their illustrations and/or journal entries. Then quickly review the major role of the archaeologists and some of the sites discussed.

Independent Practice

For homework, have students research an archaeological site of their choice, bringing in the relevant information to share with the class.

Assessment

- *Were the objectives met?*
- *If so, what is the evidence?*
- *If not, what needs to be retaught?*

Chapter 4

Seeking Assistance, Support, and Mentoring

Who are the people that will assist me from my first day through the year?

Should New Teachers Ask Questions?

New teachers often feel that if they ask questions this may reflect negatively upon their teaching, organizational ability, or grasp of their content area. Will these inquiries be construed as interest or ignorance? Reasonable questions from a beginning teacher should be met with enthusiasm and a willingness to help. After all, teachers are, by profession, people who teach and instruct others. ***Frame your questions as they arise and select the appropriate person to field them.***

There are many people available to answer your queries. You may be assigned an official mentor, someone who has the responsibility of working with new teachers. If this is the case, establish a good working relationship based on honesty and mutually shared goals. Mentors may be at your school and be available upon request, or they may be shared by several schools and work out of another school or the district office. Find out who the new teacher mentors are, and post their phone numbers and e-mail addresses near your desk or computer. Other people who may be of great assistance are those teaching in the same grade level, often referred to as grade-level colleagues. You will meet these individuals prior to the onset of school, and they will very often offer their assistance. Of all these helpful colleagues, one may become your resource for the little things that are so big. This important person can respond to your immediate smaller concerns.

Be sure to take the time to observe what others are doing and how they do it. It is difficult to observe your colleagues teaching (since you will be with your children at the same time), but take note of how they organize their room, post information, manage time, set up the room, prepare for emergencies, organize the flow, and so on. For the new teacher, each day

is the first time, and that should be respected by your colleagues. Watch, listen, ask, and you shall learn. Have a little notepad to jot down ideas when you think of them or when you see something in another room.

Before school begins, purchase a couple of boxes of small thank-you notes. When one of your colleagues provides assistance, an idea, or just a friendly word, write a short note and leave it in his or her mailbox. That gesture will go a long way.

Mentors: How Can They Help?

We have briefly mentioned in the previous section that mentors can be valuable resources. Mentors may be assigned by the principal, they may be hired by the district, they may be under special funding from the state, or they may be unofficial volunteer assistants in a variety of pedagogical areas. Your school administrator or school secretary can assist you in connecting with these people. A small district may have one mentor for each subject area who roams from school to school, with mentoring as his or her sole responsibility. In other districts, the mentors may provide services to teachers in addition to their regular teaching assignments. In still others, the mentor may receive release time for mentoring duties. Regardless, these people are there to help in a nonevaluative role.

✦ *Respect and be appreciative of the work all these people do. They are a critical part of a strong and positive school climate.*

Here is an example of how a mentor can assist you: You seek ideas on setting up an exciting social studies program that differs markedly from what you are familiar with. Call the

social studies mentor and discuss your request. Hopefully, the mentor will meet with you, assist you in room design ideas, provide resources, and even model some lessons. If you are trying to build the use of technology into your curriculum, you might want to contact the technology mentor for assistance. Sometimes mentors are very busy, and at other times they search for things to do. In many circumstances, mentors are greatly underutilized by teachers who could use their services. If this is the case in your school or district, they're all yours. A mentor can become your own private consultant.

People Who Are Important To You

Who are the most important people to you? Most teachers would agree that three of the most important people you should meet and maintain good relations with are the school secretary, the custodian, and the supervising cook. At the district level, the next group would include the payroll officer, the person responsible for benefits, and the director of curriculum.

The school secretary is probably the pivotal person at any school site. The secretary probably knows more about the workings of the school than anyone else, even more

than the principal or other administrator. He or she understands the school culture, the balance between teachers and parents, and the managerial/leadership style of the principal, and holds secrets like a Pinkerton vault. The secretary also controls access to the principal, the supplies, the flow of paperwork, and the custodian, and can help ensure that your professional life and induction to your beginning teaching are positive experiences. When you are first introduced, smile, let him or her know how happy you are to meet him or her, and by all means remember his or her name. Say good morning every day. On National Secretary Day, you'll want to give him or her a card or a small gift (even if the faculty is doing something collectively). Flowers on occasion for a non-occasion is a nice thank you and will be greatly appreciated. You might even say, "I hope I can call on you if I have questions." His or her reply will no doubt be in the affirmative.

The custodian shares the coveted most-important-person pedestal with the school secretary. The custodian is the captain of the school plant. If you need more tables and chairs, or want "dry erase" boards cleaned, spills cleaned up, or you just want that attention to detail, the custodian should be your new friend. For a new teacher, this is essential. He or she will oil squeaky doors, get you a new pencil sharpener (when you were told that the school hasn't had a new pencil sharpener in two years), have your carpet cleaned, remove gum or graffiti, or make your room just a little more attractive for Back-to-School Night. Recognize your custodian daily and show your appreciation. An occasional card, a smile, and a thank you will go a long way.

Although their importance is not as immediately apparent, the next important person in the school is often the kitchen chef or cook. Some schools bring in food for the students and teachers from a central kitchen, only dispensing it at the local school site. Yet, at many schools, cooking is still an art that combines institutional numbers with gastronomic flair. We all hear about bland cafeteria food and pasta that has so much starch you could use it to wallpaper the Smithsonian. But some schools have food that can rival the creations of a world-class chef.

Of course there are other important people, like the nurse, who will attend to the needs of your sick and moaning students. ***The librarian (if you have one) is another very important person who really works for you, providing resources to you and your students.*** A good relationship goes a long way to stocking the shelves with books that are subject-appropriate for your students. Everyone—adult to adult, adult to student, student to student—should be treated with dignity.

Respect and be appreciative of the work all these people do. They are a critical part of a strong and positive school climate.

At the district central office, three individuals should require your special attention. They are the personnel administrative assistant (who maintains credential currency), the payroll officer, and the individual in charge of teacher benefits. Each of these people will assist you when those pesky details never seem to get done, and you need a kind, understanding hand to lead you through it all. Stop in and introduce yourself during the first few weeks, before you actually need them.

✦ *Enjoy your working relationships and expand your friendships within the district. It is a small world at school, and everyone knows what everyone else is doing, so it helps to be doing it well!*

Finally, the coordinator for substitute teachers is a good person to know. When you need a substitute teacher (for an absence due to illness, a conference, a district meeting, and so forth), it's nice to get the substitute you want and one that will maintain continuity in your classroom. Having a positive relationship with this district employee will facilitate this process.

Working with Other Teachers, Instructional Aides, and Volunteer Parents

New teachers are quickly confronted with the sometimes awkward problem of what to do with parents, instructional aides, and other eager classroom volunteers. Several dilemmas exist for the beginning teacher. First, many instructional aides have far more experience both in the classroom and in working with children than does the new teacher. Second, you may shy away from allowing parents to see firsthand your obvious inexperience. What do you do?

Realize you are part of a team, but be sure to understand that ***you are the teacher and are in charge of your classroom.*** You are responsible for student learning. Second, remember that the parents and other volunteers are there to assist you in being more effective in the instructional setting.

If you know you have an employed instructional staff aide, it is a wise idea to meet with that person the week before the onset of school. Ask the aide to describe his or her past roles and duties. Be very positive and reinforce the commitment and dedication the person has demonstrated since he or she may be an important link to the community. Let them know in a caring manner that you value their participation.

It is also important to let your aide know that you may be implementing different strategies than his or her predecessor. Ask for input, but make no promises and don't elaborate on your plans at this time. Based on the organization of your instructional program, what you have learned from your discussions with your aides, and what your colleagues have shared, you will probably be able to use your instructional aides in an effective manner. Although it is a partnership, everyone turns toward you, the teacher, for leadership.

As for the day-to-day duties, you will need to determine how your aides will best support the instructional program. You may wish to establish a regular routine right from the onset, or a system whereby you communicate daily as your help arrives. In most cases, aides and other assistants do not maintain the same hours as you, so it is incumbent on you to leave instructions on a regular basis. You may want to use a mailbox or in-box system to give direction when the routine changes, or when specific information about particular students needs to be given.

As for parents, you can begin soliciting parent assistance (if you find it beneficial) during the first week of school or at Back-to-School Night. Some parents will approach you while others will feel more comfortable signing up to be considered at other school events. Either way, clear instructions and designated responsibilities are essential. Remember that with parents, some work well with children while others are wonderful at doing preparation work (for example, cutting out paper, making folders, copying, and collating). While some parents may want to work more directly with students, they must possess the appropriate skills to do so. Allow parents to do what they do best. You must be the judge. In that way, everyone benefits.

Chapter 5

Effective Teaching Strategies and Behaviors

How can I become a great teacher?
What do great teachers do?

Who are the Good Teachers?

We know a lot about teachers—those teachers who make a difference and those who don't. Some of good teaching is teaching behavior, and some of it is simply a way of being with children. Perhaps good teaching cannot be taught, but if the potential exists within a teacher, it can be coaxed along and shared with the rest of the world.

We know that some of what effective teachers do is related to planned behaviors. We know that if teachers do these at a minimum, the results will be positive. Here are a few examples of planned behaviors:

Eye contact

One of the most effective nonverbal behaviors a teacher can use within the classroom is the use of his or her eyes. For example,

- ***Meet your students' eyes from the moment they enter the room until the last glance as they exit for the journey home.***
- ***Use your eyes to give messages of approval, disapproval, expectation, or pleasure.***
- ***Put a halt to a distracting conversation between two students by simply looking directly into their eyes.***
- ***Show your approval of students by allowing your eyes to sparkle at them.***
- ***Make direct eye contact with every student a couple of minutes a day. You will be amazed at the results.***

Student seating without barriers

- ***Planning purposeful classroom seating offers both you and the children greater instructional intimacy resulting in more effective teaching and learning.***

- *Design your classroom with few barriers.*
- *Seat your children so you have both eye contact and physical contact with each of them.*
- *Instead of tight rows or tight clusters, try groups of four or six where you can see each child, reach them, and touch them.*
- *Give students a clear line of vision directly to you.*

Facial expressions and gestures

We not only talk with our eyes, we share with our expressions. Children will read and understand your powerful expressions sooner and with greater ease than with any spoken word.

- *Be expressive. The way you smile, frown, move your lips or your brow all send messages to your children.*
- *Show excitement, pleasure, concern, encouragement, and a host of others emotions.*
- *Use gestures from your limbs to provide messages. The way you stand, how you use your hands, beckon a response, wave your arms in excitement, all send messages.*

Movement and proximity

Your ability to be mobile throughout your instructional area enables you to manage the class, respond to student queries, and feel the pulse of the group.

- *Be active.*
- *Get up from your desk.*
- *Move around.*
- *Monitor student work, assist, encourage, and see what your students are doing.*

Voice

Use your voice to control the message you are trying to convey.

- *Be calm to perpetuate calmness. Use a soft voice to bring about a period of quiet work.*
- *Use inflection and tone to create interest, excitement, and motivation.*
- *Become aware of your voice and manage it for the group. We all know that a kindergarten teacher has a much more distinctive voice than a sixth-grade teacher. We use our voices to infiltrate the comfort zone of the child. With your voice, you can be a trusted friend.*

A Passion For Teaching—Making a Difference

Those teachers who are the beneficiaries of passion in the classroom know it! They truly love education and the children. Something propels them into the turmoil of teaching and learning. To be a facilitator, a lecturer, communicator of knowledge, a storyteller, or a problem solver is ecstasy. There are some truly passionate teachers who, when they enter the classroom, make something special happen. And it always happens!

These teachers are not do-gooders. They have concerns, they are fighters, and they care about the children, the school, their salaries, and working conditions. But their energies are always directed toward benefiting their young students. They are advocates for them. These teachers work so hard that others consider them foolish. They are often humble, yet every teacher at the school knows their identity—and every child and parent remembers them years later. They are often ridiculed by other staff

members for "being overcommitted" or "having no life" or jokingly "making the rest of us look bad." The definition of a passionate teacher is a complex one, but one can say that passionate teachers dearly love their students and seem to paint a breathtaking portrait of those they teach. Their ultimate hope is that each young learner will emerge as a masterpiece. And why not? Isn't that why each of us (or most of us) chose to become teachers?

Here are a few wonderful, passionate teachers, who year after year make a difference and change lives.

She is talented, loving, prepared, and sensitive. She sings, dances, plays the piano, acts, and teaches like few others. She has no particularly unique background, habits, family life, or diet. She is simply an exceptional, passionate teacher.

Each morning, as her first-grade children enter the room, she welcomes them. She greets each by name, touches him or her, smiles, and says a special word. The children enter almost in a state of awe because this room has become a haven from the external, rugged world. As they cross the physical threshold, the children's lives change in a most positive and extraordinary manner.

✦ *Teaching with love creates joy and wonders that remain with our children for a lifetime.*

The children enter willingly, warmly, happily. They love her radiant smile. She is magic and hope, for she will teach every child entering her special world.

Her classroom is a community, with all children taking responsibility for being sensitive to one another, caring about the group, and reinforcing individual and group success. The events of today are expertly choreographed as she moves around the room moving from area to area, child to child, preparing for the varied activities. There is a love of teaching so apparent that children respond with eagerness. She opens the door to the world of reading, experience, thinking, and understanding. Children squirm when struggling to understand a concept and smile when comprehension is complete. She constantly reinforces success and attempts, and she silently notes teaching strategies needed to aid in the improvement of the learning process. She experiences satisfaction and delight with every new word a child masters or the pride of a youngster as he or she ascends the ladder of self-confidence and positive self-esteem. There is no distance between the learner and the teacher.

On the north side of the room, a puppet theater stands against the wall with a box of fluffy creatures, some purchased, some hand-sewn, waiting. With a hundred distinct voices, she brings bright eyes, cheerful smiles, and laughter to these young learners as fierce alligators, sly wolves, chatting parrots, soft kittens, and other fascinating characters spring to life in this special place. Soon the children vie for the opportunity to be the puppeteer while unknowingly developing confidence, language, and a new experience.

In another corner is a bookcase filled with hats! Hats of all sizes, shapes, histories, and descriptions. Paper hats, straw hats, cloth hats, and hats that were never intended to be hats. A child can be a baseball player, ship captain, police officer, doctor, duchess, astronaut, or deep-sea diver by the simple act of selecting a hat. Imagine the excitement as learning becomes the child's freedom to be what he or she dreams!

She shares her sense of fun. She sometimes comes to school disguised as Santa Claus, a Spanish dancer, a hobo, a circus clown, or a leprechaun. She shares her life, her family, and her love with these young learners. The class is acutely aware of the gift this teacher offers. They are excited about learning, enthusiastic about school, and truly experience happiness.

She arranges, once a month, to have five of her children be her guest at a local fast-food restaurant. On another special day, the choice is roller-skating at a local roller rink. In the mind of the children, this is the finest of all rewards for behavior and work well done. Imagine the wonderful memory, having lunch side by side with your favorite teacher or being next to her when her skates slide out from under her and she falls to the floor laughing. Childhood, school, and teaching can be wonderful!

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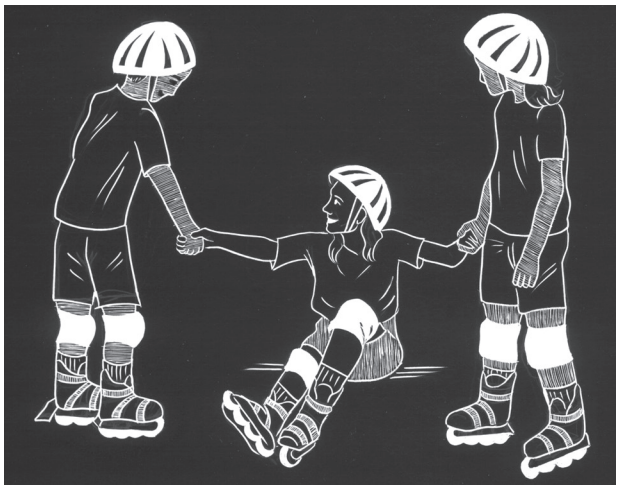
This teacher gives her upper elementary-grade students an experience of the future. The curriculum in her fourth-grade class comes alive as children engage in an integrated social studies curriculum. She brings every part of the curriculum to an engaging crescendo, where students live what they learn. They learn about the lives of western settlers, practice the art and science of engineers, actively participate in trade and commerce, and learn what working in a community is all about.



Once each year, she prepares her children for a special field trip to a local university. There they see the beautifully landscaped grounds, look into an academic college classroom, visit a farm, walk and smell the fragrances in a picturesque rose garden, explore a rooftop rain forest, handle reptiles, and watch riding practice at an equestrian center. They catch a glimpse of a place where future scientists, architects, business leaders, and teachers are engaged in serious study. Their teacher ushers them from one new adventure to another. With smiles, enthusiasm, and kindness she leads them into their possible future. For the majority of these children, the excursion has been beyond the life experience of their families. For some, it may be the last time they are a part of higher education and its potential for hope. For others, this is a new and exciting experience that will remain inside them, perhaps offering a persuasive focus for a brighter future.

Expectations

We will mention teacher expectations many times in this book. Critical to the success of both student and teacher is high expectations. We know that if expectations are low, students try to meet the minimum requirements. Conversely, if expectations are high and yet reasonable, students will work hard to meet them, and in most cases will make the mark. Make your teaching and learning expectations clear from day one. Remind students of their potential every day until the end of the year. Communicate this through words, language, and deeds. Let them know that you know they can accomplish great things. Encourage

children to think, solve problems, and work hard. The work you give them should be important, and they should understand this importance. Finally, reinforce students constantly for their good work and for meeting and exceeding your expectations. Demonstrate expectations in points and charts and in your excitement, planning, and attitude. Expect that your students can handle complex tasks and can tackle problems and learning in new ways with different results. Some will say, "I didn't think children at this level could accomplish all this." Well, they can if you expect it and appropriately lead the way.

Laughing with Your Children

The greatest prescription for a happy, healthy classroom community is to enjoy your children. When you visit classrooms where the children like school and where the teacher truly enjoys teaching, you will see the smiles, hear the laughing, and experience this special nurturing community. The relaxed, trusting atmosphere indicates that all is well in the classroom. Laughter and a sense of purpose and well-being will result in fewer absences (for children and teacher), greater participation, innovation, effort, and perhaps even a love of learning and school. Laughing with your children keeps the day-to-day events in perspective and helps you to appreciate what you do and to clarify your mission as a teacher. Children can laugh, too. Each child is a sensitive being who feels joy and pain, sadness and pleasure. Laughter among your children indicates that something is right at school.

Stereotyping and Omissions

Without embarking on an evangelical rampage criticizing all teachers who have inappropriately used stereotypic words, images, or instruction, we shall only say, "Beware" and "Be aware."

In many classrooms at Thanksgiving, for example, girls and boys adorned with headdress feathers and painted faces make small talk with other children dressed as Pilgrims. In truth, the eastern Native Americans did not dress in this style. More significantly, the actual story of the Native Americans and the newcomers is much different from the standard "Thanksgiving feast" version. Your children do not need to hear grim details, but you can offer a fairly accurate and appropriate account of some of the events at students' own levels.

You are the teacher, and you can choose to have "truth in advertising" in your classroom. You need to rethink the history of Columbus "discovering" the Americas by looking at the Native American population, and to look closely at the context in which historical events occurred.

We are accustomed to being sensitive to African-American culture and its place within African and American history. We have studied

the European colonization of the Americas as a school tradition. Currently, we look at the pride and history of the Latino and Hispanic cultures. But other groups have a history too. Do we continue to lump together Eastern Europeans, Middle Eastern, and Russian immigrants as Anglo-Saxons? Do we continue to refer to Koreans, Cambodians, Japanese, Thai, Chinese, Pakistanis, and Indians, as Orientals or Asians? Stereotyping is not the domain of any one type or group of teachers. We must be open and sensitive to the growing diversity in our nation, for it is our responsibility to discover what we need to know. If it is not included in our teacher education program or textbooks, take the initiative to explore the many resources available that provide a broader perspective of these issues. We have an obligation to teach without stereotypes, to make sense out of what we learn, and to use common sense in how we teach.

Changing Your Teaching Behaviors

Teaching behavior determines effectiveness in the classroom. As an effective teacher, you should be willing to examine everything you do and how you do it, and willingly modify those behaviors that don't really work.

We have already discussed some of those behaviors and the many ways you can use them in the classroom. There are others, as well. For example, you may wish to change the way you ask questions to be more gender equitable, or you may want to ask questions of varying degrees of difficulty. This can lead you to wait longer before calling on a particular student, or to extinguish an ineffective behavior or strategy. You should also be sure to use various methods of checking for understanding.

You may want to reassess the use of the word *shhhh* to quiet a group of children. Not only is *shhhh* annoying and ineffective, but also it adds to the classroom noise and general chaos.

> ✦ *What we do and say in the classroom has a direct and immediate impact on learning. We should give careful thought to our actions.*

Here is a technique for helping you get rid of this behavior:

- ***Cut a piece of brightly colored construction paper into four pieces about four inches by four inches.***
- ***Draw a happy face with a marker on each of the pieces.***
- ***Attach one piece of paper to each of the four walls just above your eye level so they can be seen them from anywhere in the room.***
- ***Every time you find yourself about to say "shhhh," you will see the reminder and not use the sound.***

This technique is effective for almost anything that you need to be reminded of, whether it be to use a positive behavior or to extinguish a negative one. But remember, work on only one thing at a time. Try it and you'll be amazed at your success.

Time Dedicated to Your Task

Most beginning teachers lament the lack of time to do the things they want to do. While some time issues have to do solely with you and your class, other time issues relate to the operation and culture of the school. Some time wasters and disruptions occur whenever the

public address system comes on, the telephone rings, or someone walks through the door. What can you do about it?

- ***Bring the issue to the attention of other teachers and see if they feel the same way.***
- ***Ask the office staff not to interrupt you unless it is an emergency.***
- ***Help the school understand (in a nice way) that important activities are occurring in your classroom. Executive meetings at major corporations are seldom interrupted, so why does there seem to be so little respect for what is happening in the classroom?***
- ***Plan instructional activities that create a positive learning momentum.***
- ***We have the same allotted time regardless of how we use it. Maximize the effectiveness of that time.***

Chapter 6

Planning Your Classroom Management

With so many diverse learners, what is the most effective method for managing my class?

Classroom Management

Today's teachers know a good deal about teaching and human behavior, and quickly come to realize that what seems to make pedagogical sense in the classroom does not always work. Sure, we know that teachers who are organized, manage time well, prepare appropriate lessons, have a clear management plan, and utilize positive, effective teaching behaviors, will have far fewer management problems than those who simply survive in the classroom. However, we also know that some students do not respond to many of the tried and true methods or strategies that we employ. These are the children who bring to the classroom so much personal baggage that the influence of the teacher, although great, will not be enough to change the behavior. Should you give up? Of course not. Have hope? Of course. Continue to provide all the students with the best possible education experience. Try new approaches.

Our goal related to classroom management is simple: to create a classroom environment where all students can exercise their right to learn, and where the teacher can exercise his or her right to teach. When expectations are presented clearly again and again, the learner will rise to those expectations. If high expectations are not the focus, student behaviors will be consistent with those expectations.

- ***Post your behavioral expectations for all to see.***
- ***Ensure that your expectations are appropriate, clear, and understood.***
- ***Ensure they are ever-present for the students to see as they are coming and going or working.***
- ***Review them the first day of school and then continuously during the first week.***
- ***Refer to them often to assist the children in being successful.***

What are five or six behavioral expectations you will post? Before you decide, think about which expectations are good for the children and which ones are good for you. Here are some ideas.

Rules:

- ***Respect all persons in this class.***
- ***Use the appropriate language and voice.***
- ***Keep your hands, feet, and other body parts to yourself.***
- ***Raise your hand before speaking.***
- ***Work appropriately at your desk or in cooperative groups.***
- ***Do not speak when the teacher is talking.***

Consequences:

- ***First infraction—Warning***
- ***Second—Time-out at recess***
- ***Third—Time in another room***
- ***Fourth—Phone call home***
- ***Fifth—Principal, suspension, parent conference***

Of course, these are only examples, and the beginning teacher must realize that there is no cookbook approach to classroom management. What is important is being consistent. If you give a warning to one student, you must give a warning to all who practice the same behavior. You must follow the plan. Negotiation is not part of the plan. Often, new teachers are reluctant to enforce the rules. They warn the students that if they violate the rules again, they are going to get a warning. That sends a clear message to the student that the teacher is not consistent and doesn't mean what he or she says. Thus, above all else, if your plan is fair, be consistent and follow it.

Teachers have many ways to keep track of students who do not follow the rules. You can jot the names down on the corner of the front board. When another violation by the same student occurs, you can add a check-mark after the name. While some schools and teachers find this method too "public," other educators find it very effective. You be the judge. Many elementary teachers prefer the flip card chart (see the next page). Here's how you use it:

- ***Make a large poster board and attach a library book pocket for each of your students.***
- ***Using a marking pen, write his or her name under the pocket for easy viewing.***
- ***Put four to six construction paper cards of different colors in each pocket, one for each of the consequences.***

For example, if your cards are, from top to bottom, green, yellow, orange, brown, and red, all the green cards are showing at the onset of the new day.

For the first infraction, the student quietly takes the green card and places it behind the others exposing the next card, which is yellow. This indicates that the child has been warned. For each card flipped, the appropriate consequence is applied. This approach permits the learner to actively accept responsibility for his or her action by flipping the cards. The teacher simply says, "Brandon, please turn your card," and continues on with the instruction without fanfare or additional attention.

If you find yourself with a large list of names or a flip card chart with many red cards facing outward, something in your management plan is not working. It's okay to abandon one method for another if you feel the latter creates a more effective learning environment.

Flip Card Management Chart

Using library pockets and tag board, attach one pocket to the board for each student in the class. Be sure to leave room for extra pockets in the event that new students are added to your class. Write each student's name on a pocket. Glue the pockets to the tag board in alphabetical order. Once the glue has dried, add the colored cards to each pocket (using the same color order for each child—for example, green on top, yellow next, then orange, brown, and red at the bottom). Mount the chart in a location that will be easy for students to reach if they should need to pull a card.

Management Chart

Some teachers believe that the children should have a central role in determining appropriate rules and consequences. This is fine and will yield the same results as when the teacher issues the rules. The difference may be that the children feel they have a greater investment in the rules they helped create. If you choose this path, let students brainstorm, either in small groups or as a total class, a list of rules and the consequences of breaking them. Then cull the list to those five rules and consequences that seem appropriate. Children will be tougher on punishments than you will be. Have fun and be sure to guide the process in a direction that yields the results that you require. Democracy is wonderful, but you, as the teacher, will be accountable.

Some students have little or no respect for the management plan. Some students may simply not be capable of functioning as members of the classroom community under these circumstances, thus taking the "rules and consequences" approach becomes meaningless. These children may require a modified approach. For example, you may discover one of your students is unable to sit in his seat for more than thirty seconds.

- ***Begin a reward system with the student that recognizes his or her incremental accomplishments.***
- ***Give him or her stickers or points each time the goal is met.***
- ***Have him or her sit for one minute and then stand quietly behind his or her desk for several minutes.***
- ***Keep these goals very small at first so that they are attainable. The other children in the class have already noticed the student's unacceptable behavior so they will understand the special treatment.***
- ***Arrange for the student to be out of the room for a few minutes and inform the class of what you are doing. Children can be very mature and understanding. With some luck, hard work, and patience, you and your students may very well be successful.***

Quick Notes for Managing the Classroom

The following are some quick notes on maximizing what you do in the classroom. These are effective teaching behaviors that truly make a difference for the teacher and learner.

Make expectations clear

Let the students know your expectations for both academic work and behavior. Discuss them prior to each learning episode and during transitions.

Meet students at the door

Meet your students at the door when they come in for the first time each day and after recess, lunch, or the library. Stop them for a moment, relate to the previous activity, and review in a positive manner the acceptable expectations as they enter the room.

Follow through

When you correct students, ask for their attention and be sure to follow through. Do not ignore the same negative behavior after you issued a warning. If you do, you are sending the double message "I really don't mean what I say."

Use the classroom rules

Review the classroom rules with students. These are the standards the students understand, and are the expectations of the classroom community. By reviewing and

clarifying these expectations, you are setting a climate of success rather than of failure. Post the rules and consequences from day one. Students expect to be guided by these rules, and they willingly accept them.

Call home for the good things

Make phone calls home that commend and report on positive class work. If you should need to get parental support in the future, it will be much easier if you have made a positive contact earlier. Try making at least five calls a week to various parents and guardians during the first six weeks of school.

Learn and use students' names

Be familiar with student names as quickly as possible. Perhaps take a picture of each student on the first day and have it developed overnight or use a digital camera and print it on the classroom computer. Create a bulletin board with pictures and names. This is nice for everyone and a help for you.

Have a clear seating chart

This is a tool that will be useful for you and future substitute teachers. It also informs the students that you know what you are doing and are organized. Young children also find security in having a place they can call their own. You may, of course, change seating depending on specific activities and groupings that take place throughout the year. There should be times when students can and should make choices as to where they will sit and what activity they will participate in.

Make eye contact

Use lots of eye contact throughout the day, both to address a problem and to provide positive nonverbal cues. Look students directly in the eye if you desire a behavior that they can respond to. ***Note:*** Do not demand that students look you in the eye, as this controlling behavior may violate some cultural norms.

Use proximity

Walk around the room often. Teach from all parts of the instructional area, not simply from the front. This sends a clear message of confidence and control. Proximity also eliminates excessive talking and keeps students focused.

Positive reinforcement

Provide reinforcement for positive behavior and good work. Use individual and group praise. Genuine praise pays great dividends for everyone.

Be prepared every day

Never just "slide." You should be prepared every day and for every lesson.

Make lessons engaging and multimodal

Be sure to design lessons so they appeal to the modalities of the learners. Students should listen, see, and do! You'll have greater success and so will your students.

Give clear instructions

Check for understanding before each task. Never assume that students understand what you want them to do. At the onset, write instructions on the board or overhead projector, and present them verbally as well.

Involve as many students as possible in each learning episode. Wait long enough to ensure that as many students as possible are working

and thinking. Accepting quick responses only indicates that one or two students are participating. The wait time sets the tone in the class that participation is valued and expected.

Don't use "shhhh"

It doesn't work. Instead, ask for the attention of the class. Say, "I need your attention now," or give a signal such as "One, two, three, eyes on me." Clap or raise your hand. Don't talk over the students. They will hear you if they think you are serious.

Lower your voice when you want to be heard

Often, the tendency is to shout over the children when you want to be heard. This often leads to the expectation that you will do this every time. Instead, move to a position where you can be seen and lower the volume of your voice. Students will soon understand that they will need to be quiet in order to hear you.

Create an environment where your students feel pride

Create a classroom environment with lots of student work, large group name signs, and student photographs. If students take pride in where they live and learn, they will treat it with respect.

Don't wait for students to come to you for help

Look and see who is struggling, go to them, and assist them in solving problems quickly. This is a function of the monitoring process.

Have motivational projects that make school dynamic

Develop central projects that are thematic and engaging. They should involve the students in multimodal teaching and learning. Integrated/thematic units centered on social studies work exceedingly well.

Short- and long-term planning

Think about what you are doing in the various subject areas. Map it out on paper so you can actually see the connections and lessons over a period of time.

Network with your colleagues

Realize that both teaching and learning do not need to occur in isolation. Discuss your ideas with your colleagues. Brainstorm developing plans and benefit from the shared experiences of the group.

Do not perpetuate the way you were taught if that was ineffective

Look for new delivery systems using inquiry, cooperative learning, thematic teaching, technology, and methods that lend themselves to richness in learning. Students will respond in a positive manner, and your class will be a very special place.

Have fun and enjoy the children

Demonstrate that you like what your are doing and that you are enjoying your students.

Managing Transitions to Maximize Learning and Minimize Problems

Many of the management problems experienced by beginning teachers are an outgrowth of transitions. These are the short events that occur when we move students from one activity to the next—recess, lunch, or moving around the school.

The following identifies transitions and describes the ways of handling them.

Meeting the students in the yard

Meet the students in the yard at a designated place. Instruct them to line up and wait for you to arrive to accompany them to the room (with different procedures for inclement weather). Greet your students with "Good morning, girls and boys," or "It looks like everyone had a good time at recess," or "It's great to see you this afternoon. We have some exciting things to do for the remainder of the day." Part of the transition process is to calm the children and to connect with them. Give instructions such as "Let's walk quietly to the classroom." If students do not behave, stop them and do it again. If you feel they just have too much energy, simply say with a smile, "Let's everyone take fifteen seconds and get all the wiggles out." For the next quarter of a minute everyone (including you) can shake and wiggle. This is a good, fun way to move children from playing to classroom work.

Entering in an orderly fashion

When you arrive at the classroom door, line the students briefly against the outside wall. Again, greet them, get their attention, tell them what they will be doing, and explain your expectations and instructions on what to do next. For example, say, "Boys and girls, when I say so, please quietly enter the room, take your seats, take out your independent reading books, and begin to read. No talking please. If you have a question when you are at your seat, raise your hand." Before students move inside, check for understanding with a question similar to the following: "Please raise your hand if you can tell me what we are to do when we enter the room." Use wait time, call on a student, restate the response, be sure everyone has heard it, and then enter the room. If students correctly followed directions, give them positive reinforcement. If they didn't, have students do it again.

✦ *If you feel they just have too much energy, simply say with a smile, "Let's everyone take fifteen seconds and get all the wiggles out." For the next quarter of a minute everyone (including you) can shake and wiggle.*

Following daily routines

After lunch have students enter the room, put away lunch things, hang up jackets, sit down at their desks, take out free reading books, and read quietly for five minutes or until given directions.

Moving from one subject to another

What do you do when you have to change from independent reading to social studies, or from a spelling test to math? The key to smooth transitions is clear directions, consistency, and follow-through. When giving the last word of the spelling test, all the children know it's over. Thus, tell them, "After you write this last word, check over your papers, hold them for the collection monitors, use quiet voices, and get out your math books." You may need to remind

students, but if they are not doing what you want, stop everything, explain it again, and have them proceed as instructed. If you don't follow through, the message is again, "I'm telling you what you need to do, but I really don't mean it."

Very Important: ***When you are instructing students to turn to a specific page in a book, tell them exactly what book and page number, writing the page number on the board and holding up the book.*** In this way, you are providing students with two of the three learning modalities; they are hearing and seeing the instructions.

Leaving the room

Following the classroom activity, get the attention of the class. Explain what your behavior expectations are for the transition by saying, "Girls and boys, when I say to do so, those of you who are buying lunch quietly line up at the door. Those who brought lunch, get your lunches from your backpacks and also quietly line up at the door. Okay, let's go." Monitor the transitions so that expectations are met. Remember, the children are still under your supervision from the time they leave your room until the time they arrive at their destination. Therefore, you must accompany them to the drop-off point. This will avoid pushing, shoving, running, and name-calling. Your class will be a happier and more effective community when your transitions are orderly and positive.

Chapter 7

Strategies for Organization

How do I assist students in becoming self-initiating learners and problem solvers?

Inquiry in the Classroom

Inquiry in the classroom can be described and practiced in many ways. The inquiry approach can also be referred to as the discovery method, student decision making, problem solving, self-initiated learning, or students asking and answering their own questions. The intent of this section is to raise your awareness of this method and its value.

All teachers and parents desire that students will learn in school to make good choices and decisions that will then carry into the real world. In order for this to occur, we must allow students to make choices, solve problems, and make decisions. Some might view all of this as a change in the role of the teacher from determiner of knowledge to facilitator. It is about the process even more than the product. When children come to understand that they create the process, the product will emerge more easily and more often. Here is an example of using inquiry in the classroom.

You are walking along the edge of the playground and stumble across a large crack in the asphalt. The child notices the crack and asks you, the teacher (or parent), "Where did the crack come from?" As a teacher, you make a decision about how you are going to respond. The easy decision is to simply tell the child the answer and move on. It satisfies the child's curiosity and all is well until the next inquiry. The more thoughtful response, and one that leads to process, might be, "Well, where do you think it came from?" "Whoa," the child rears back and thinks, "if I wanted to play guessing games, I wouldn't have asked." Based on all of the other inquiries in his or her young history, the student replies, "I don't know." You respond, "Well, if you wanted to know, what could you do?" The child hesitates again and says, "I don't know." You ask another question, "What could you do to find out more about that crack?" "Look at it closer," the child says. "How could you do that?" you fire back. From here you and the child get down on all fours and begin to follow the crack to the edge

of the playground. Aha!!! The child sees that the crack leads right to a large tree that is raising the asphalt from the adjoining level surface. With guidance, the child has asked and answered his or her own question. It's celebration time!

The significance of the inquiry is that next time the child may ask, say, and do the same thing, but sooner or later he or she will see the power of being able to solve the problems identified. Sure, it's a longer, sometimes painstaking process, but it is moving the student closer and closer to self-initiated learning. Hooray!

✦ *The teacher of tomorrow may not be required to have the answers for every question a student ponders. Should we re-think our role within the classroom today?*

Another example of using inquiry with your students is to pose questions or problems and ask students to seek the appropriate resources to make a determination about the answer.

Ask students: "Which airport has the longer runway: Los Angeles International or Denver International? How can you find out?" With these questions, students begin to identify resources that will offer them access to data that will assist them in answering the question. Students might wish to contact a pilot or an airport or look in an almanac or encyclopedia. Some of their searches will yield nothing or very little, while others will pan out.

To introduce students to the inquiry method, try to find questions or problems that they can relate to, possibly issues surrounding their community or school. These are preliminary exercises that will help students with more complex questions and problems. When that light comes on, and you can see the "Aha" within the learner, it is a wondrous event. Whether it is figuring out a question about space, physics, the weather, or social studies, the inquiry method allows the learner to practice the skills of the real world.

A Few Concepts and Strategies for Introducing the Inquiry Method

- ***The teacher plans the inquiry episode, including anticipated responses.***
- ***The teacher poses a question (later the students pose questions).***
- ***Students meet and share ideas related to the question.***
- ***Students design strategies to collect necessary data (research, experiment, measurement, and so forth).***
- ***Students assemble the data into meaningful categories.***
- ***Students make assumptions about the problem based on the data.***
- ***Students state their theory or solution to the problem.***

The complexity of the inquiry method will depend upon your skill, student ability and interest, and practice. It is a new way of thinking and operating within the classroom. The inquiry process is challenging for teacher and learner, but the rewards are immense.

If inquiry is an approach you would like to develop in your classroom, we suggest you seek one or more of the many complete resources available on this topic.

Cooperative Learning: The Basics Will Do

One of our paramount educational goals is to develop a social environment where students can work together on meaningful learning experiences. If your classroom is student centered, then it is natural that you develop and strengthen the cooperative nature of that environment. Ideally, cooperative learning becomes the way you do things—not all things, but some. Guidelines for cooperative learning are as follows:

- ***Groups should be heterogeneous.***
- ***Groups should ideally be composed of four to six members, with high, medium, and low learners.***
- ***Groups should have an equal number of boys and girls and be ethnically mixed whenever possible.***
- ***Students should assume necessary roles for the particular activity as recorder, encourager, illustrator, editor, facilitator, and so forth.***
- ***When implementing cooperative groups, start slowly, review the organization, practice the roles, and remember that it's the first time.***
- ***Change your cooperative groups depending on the project, task, or activity.***
- ***View your role as a facilitator rather than as a teacher.***
- ***Encourage students to monitor the process, but be available to assist groups when the process breaks down or undue power influences the process.***
- ***Alter the state of the classroom environment during the activities.***
- ***Encourage a new role of cooperation and communication between students and teacher.***
- ***Communicate and clarify your expectations pertaining to cooperative learning behaviors/roles and classroom rules.***
- ***Assess the group in a variety of ways, not simply on its product.***
- ***Allow students to assess the quality of their personal contribution within the group.***
- ***Require students to assess the participation and contributions of all the other members.***
- ***Provide a time for process and product feedback.***
- ***Encourage groups to establish an identity, creating a sense of strength, cohesion, and focus.***
- ***Change the makeup of groups with different class activities to prevent group stagnation, resentment, or comfort from influencing progress.***

For cooperative learning, the classroom should have the flexibility to permit a variety of seating, grouping, and working arrangements simultaneously. Neatness and order is not the priority. Instead, it is utilitarian pragmatism, or whatever works. For example,

- ***Organize simple desk-seating clusters so that four to six students can meet and work together on a regular basis. These clusters may be used for regular classroom seating or for cooperative activities only.***
- ***"Research centers" are places where students can bring reference books, computer printouts, and other data to be compiled for problem resolution.***

- *"Editor desks" may be places where editors work to compile and finalize the product.*
- *"Illustrator clusters" may be centers where art supplies, illustration materials, or computer design tools are available for the members assigned in this area.*
- *"Technology centers" are places with computers, electrical hookups, cables, hardware, and software. These centers should be in full view of the teacher.*
- *"Independent areas" may be single tables, floor space, or other nonspecified work areas where individual team members work on a specific task.*
- *"Conference centers or clusters" may be places where the group meets to review materials, clarify objectives, share progress, brainstorm ideas, or reach consensus.*
- *"Resource areas" may be the classroom library, the school library, the technology area (including the reference shelf) or even the classroom telephone for making contact with outside experts.*

Specific Cooperative Learning Strategies

The following are the most commonly used cooperative learning strategies.

Jigsaw

The Jigsaw approach is probably the best-known and most widely used approach to cooperative learning. It is based on the operational premise that students work separately, becoming experts on a designated portion of a problem. The "experts" then teach the information to the other members of the group, offering a sense of the whole (as in a jigsaw puzzle) to the original question or project.

Group investigation

After students form appropriate-size groups, each new group decides which organization and strategies it will use to investigate the question or problem. Sub-groups provide progress reports to the team, who will later report the results of the investigation to the entire class.

Academic study achievement teams

In this approach, students share resources and learn a large body of material that is usually posed in terms of questions. Students in subgroups or miniteams take a portion of the questions to be learned, reaching a conclusion with answers to their questions. The questions and answers are then shared with the entire group prior to a formal assessment.

Teachers should take the initiative in designing and implementing cooperative learning activities that foster desirable learning behaviors and outcomes. The format and

design may be fresh and original and can lead to changing the way things are done at school. Don't be afraid to try it.

Multiple Assessments that Make Grading Fair

To avoid the charge of inequity related to assigning one grade to all members of the group (regardless of an individual group member's contribution), multiple assessment criteria apply. When students understand this criteria, they are more relaxed, anxiety levels drop, they feel better about their individual contribution, and they generally attain greater group participation. The following is a list of criteria.

Process

Observe the groups in progress and make notes related to their process. Ask students if they conducted themselves in a professional manner, followed an orderly plan, sought resources that would facilitate meeting the objectives, and assumed their roles as a part of this process.

Individual process contribution

Assess the process contribution of each group member, primarily through observation. Look for leadership, encouraging behaviors, acceptance of other ideas, openness, and collegiality.

Group cooperation

Assess the entire group on how well members work together. Look for sharing, openness, noncompetitiveness, synergy, eagerness to work with every member, a cohesive spirit, common goals, and willingness to be flexible in relation to the needs of the group.

Individual product contributions

During the group process, students will share with the instructor the individual product contributions. This may be research ideas or a physical product that will be combined with other contributions.

Group member assessment

Each member of the group will assess the contributions and process of each of the other members. This will be accomplished through a written feedback form and will be kept confidential by the teacher. The teacher will have clear evidence related to those students who exhibited either positive or noncooperative behaviors.

Product assessment by class peers

The entire class may choose to give feedback on the quality or effectiveness of the group work. A specific criteria sheet should be developed for this purpose and clear instructions should be provided.

Product assessment by teacher

Evaluate the final group product using the project criteria. It is important for you the teacher to provide written and/or verbal feedback to the group members.

The assessment will provide you with data for grading. If you seek detailed strategies and/or information on specific approaches to cooperative learning, locate some of the many teacher resource materials available at your local education supply store, children's book dealer, educational publisher's catalogs, or through your district curriculum specialist.

Chapter 8

Starting School: The First Day and Week

What do I do and what do I say the first day of school?

The First Day

It's the first day of school and you are greeted by all those big smiles and bright, excited eyes. You want the first day to go smoothly and with purpose. You want all of your students to feel comfortable in their home away from home. The tone you set this day will be the one for the next ten months. There won't be another first day of school to try things differently until next year or the next track. In this section, we will look at what you can do to create a first day of meaningful activities, establishing a positive instructional and social climate for your students.

Before the students arrive

You want to look good. Wear the dress or the slacks, shirt, and tie that achieve this. Do what makes you feel energized, but remember, you are a professional and you want to put your best foot forward. Your students will be wearing bright new clothes or freshly ironed uniforms that first day, so most teachers dress up a bit for the first encounter with parents and children.

You have already set up your classroom for this day, so you can assume that all of your materials, desk cards, pencils, paper, bulletin boards, and calendars are in place. Here are some actions you can take to make the first day run smoothly.

Pre-arrival checklist:

- ***Arrive at school early.***
- ***Prepare roll sheet or student cards in advance.***
- ***Prepare seating chart in advance.***
- ***Have name cards taped to desks.***
- ***Have books ready.***
- ***Have lesson plan notes for the first day.***

- ***Have lesson plan materials for all the day's lessons.***
- ***Have lists and procedures for subsidized and regular lunches.***
- ***Have recess procedures.***
- ***Have dismissal procedures.***
- ***Make arrangements for a crisis or questions with a colleague.***
- ***Know your assigned duties for the first day and week.***

Entering the classroom

On the first day, most schools have the students come directly to the classroom rather than have the teachers meet the students on the playground or yard (with the exception of kindergarten and during inclement weather). If you do meet the children on the playground or outside of the room, stop them at the classroom door and explain what they are to do when they enter the room. This is the beginning of helping them have successful school experiences. It also begins to set the expectations for this new group of learners.

Once the door is opened, the parents and children begin the ritual of entering their new class for the first day. The upper-grade students are "too cool" and saunter on in, laughing and giggling, looking for their desk, name card, and assigned seat. The younger children are less confident and may enter being silly, or hand-in-hand with their parents or guardians. Of course you smile and say hello to each of them as they pass over the threshold of their new class. Since school has not officially started, encourage students and adults to look at all the interesting things around the classroom.

For the kindergarten or lower-grade students, you may wish to have name tags that tape, pin, or clip to their clothing. Since the littlest ones won't spend much time at desks, it is important that they have name tags. Once the bell rings, instruct the children to take their assigned seats. Although some teachers like to have students select their own seats as a function of a democratic process, most find that teacher decision making in this area removes uncertainty, eliminates personality conflicts, jealousy, and hurt feelings, and facilitates a smooth onset to the school year. For those who utilize learning centers extensively, regular assigned seating is still compatible. The students have assigned seats while doing regular seat work and are in specified groups when they are at centers or doing computer work. We will talk more about seating for special-needs children and those children with limited language proficiency.

> ✦ *You are larger than life to your students. Your smile lights up the room. Your eyes are reaching to every child, and now they await your first words.*

Saying good-bye to the kindergarten parents

Now it's time for the little ones and their parents to say good-bye. For most, it's no problem. But for a few it is traumatic! The child grabs the leg of the parent, the parent offers sympathy and hugs back, the two of them stick together like super glue. You give the parent the eye and help to pry them apart, but the parent looks at the crying child and hugs him or her again. Thunk, they are stuck again. Mom or Dad heads for the door, but their little sweetheart is dragging behind now, screaming, with tears running

down a sad face. You take the child by the hand and say to Mom or Dad, "Say good-bye, tell your child you'll see him or her after lunch, and please head out the door and don't look back." The little one is still crying but Mom or Dad is gone. The crying slows until he or she looks up and sees Mom or Dad looking in the window. Then it starts again. Most of the children will do just fine. For a few, the experience of separation is very unsettling. It may continue for a few minutes, an hour, all day or even the first week. Eventually, children will get over it.

A few tips to help in those first tentative minutes in kindergarten.

- ***Encourage the parents to say good-bye, hug the child, and disappear.***
- ***Don't permit the parent to stay, although this may be a tradition in a few schools on the first day.***
- ***Advise parents to be out of view of the child after they say good-bye.***
- ***Provide toys for the children and encourage them to play.***
- ***Have music playing to create a cheerful environment.***
- ***Encourage other children to play with those who are reluctant.***
- ***Plan lots of engaging activities to involve all the children.***
- ***Have volunteers or aides to help with those reluctant children, as well as to offer support to all.***
- ***Give lots of positive reinforcement to all the children.***

Your words on the first day

You are larger than life to your students. Your smile lights up the room. Your eyes are reaching to every child, and now they await your first words. They are looking up at you and you say, "Good morning, girls and boys. It is so nice to have such a happy group of children in our third-grade classroom." Another approach might be: "My name is Ms./Mrs./Mr. _____, I'll be your fourth-grade teacher this year. We are going to have wonderful time."

Note: *Have the students call you by your last name.* Some teachers think that children can't pronounce long names and thus opt for an abbreviation or a letter, or allow the child to call them "teacher." Children of any age are capable of learning how to pronounce the teacher's name and should do so. It is part of the professionalism of what and who you are.

Realize that there is neither a right way to begin your school year, nor is there a script to follow. You want to learn something about each of your students, make the children feel comfortable, and begin to informally assess their abilities and teach them the routines.

Beginning with routines

Much of your first day and week will be devoted to learning the routines of the classroom. If you set realistic expectations and practice the routines during this period, your year will get off to a positive start.

Have the children hang up their backpacks either on the back of the chairs or in a designated area in the room. Many teachers like the backpacks near the children so they can get materials and books as needed. Of course,

backpacks can be a temptation for "unlawful" toys and other distracting items. It's your call. Show the children where to hang coats, hats, and rain gear.

This might be a good time to call roll and begin to learn the children's names. If you are at a school where photographs accompany the enrollment cards, you can begin to put the names and faces together before the first day. Call each student by name and have him or her indicate he or she is present. Some teachers have the children simply say "here" while others have each child say, "Good morning Ms./Mrs./Mr._____ ." The value of the latter is that it builds confidence and language. It may be too formal for some, but it is especially effective for the younger students.

For the very young children, there are songs and games that help all the children recognize each other's names. These are fun and are great for helping students begin to recognize letters and sounds, for building self-esteem, and for contributing to the positive climate of the new classroom community.

In the upper grades, students can answer when their name is called and tell something about themselves. This could be something that they have that is unique: something about their pets, a vacation they have been on, or a special movie they have seen. You may want to lead off by modeling this activity, sharing a few things about yourself and your family.

Formal daily opening

Most classrooms have a formal opening which remains very much the same from day to day. It usually involves:

- ***A greeting from the teacher***
- ***A positive statement about what is going to happen that day***
- ***A patriotic exercise (which may or may not be the flag salute)***
- ***Attendance activities***
- ***Discussion of the schedule, special events, or school news***
- ***Acknowledgment of any students who were absent (letting them know they were missed)***
- ***Collection of homework by monitors***
- ***Lunch count***
- ***Sending of attendance and lunch information to the office***
- ***Optional activities such as discussion of a current event, the weather, or a new word or phrase.***

How you decide to open your classroom is very much a product of what you feel is beneficial for your students and at the same time what will accomplish the necessary business. ***Consider the fact that children like routines. They feel more secure knowing what is going to happen.*** If a deviation will occur, they like to be informed. Don't we as adults like that as well?

The classroom

One of the early objectives of the opening of school is to get the children acquainted with the classroom. Each teacher organizes his or her classroom in a different way. As you begin your orientation early in the day, you will want to take the students on a tour of the classroom. Since you know that all learners remember

when you use a multimodal approach, be sure to show them, tell them, provide examples, and allow them to ask questions. The following are typical tour stops in becoming familiar with this environment.

Doors: Show students how to open doors with care and respect for others. Is there one door for entering and one for exiting? If so, point this out.

Computers: Show students the computers (turn them on) and briefly describe some of the fascinating telecommunication projects you will be doing.

Teacher's desk: Keep this off limits to students unless permission is granted. Confidential material is kept in the desk and it must be respected.

Sink, indoor drinking fountain, and towel dispenser: Although you may think that students know how to safely use the sink and water fountain, lack of instruction often results in flooding. Discuss water conservation and conservation of paper towels.

Pencil sharpener: Pencil sharpeners are distracting, a vehicle for a student to escape, and an auditory nuisance. Invest in an electric pencil sharpener. They are quiet and stop grinding the pencil when a sharp point is formed. You'll quickly appreciate this tip.

Electrical outlets: Point out the electrical outlets on the walls or the floor. Be sure the students understand the dangers associated with these. Students should never put any object into the socket. They should report to the teacher any uncovered floor sockets and a healthy caution should be the rule. This is the opportunity to show students what's hot and what's not.

In-basket for turning in papers: This is an organizational device that assists in the flow of people and paper within the room. Homework or other assignments can be deposited quickly and quietly in this box.

Out-baskets for picking up work: The out-baskets may be a series of baskets by desk grouping, number, or alphabet to aid in the distribution of returned papers.

Tray for clean paper: Paper should be available for your students to use freely. If they know it is there, they are less likely to hoard it. This will serve as a good distribution point for table monitors.

Extra pencils, erasers, and crayons: This is a place where extra supplies are kept for student use as needed.

Classroom library: Share the classroom library with your students. Hold up samples of books, handle them with respect, show emotion, and welcome students to this rich resource. Show them how to care for books by stacking them correctly and neatly.

Software library: The contemporary classroom will have a number of software selections that can be used with the computers. Among these are information resources, word processing, databases, graphics, subject reinforcers, and simulations. Clarify the rules and procedures for borrowing, using, and returning these materials.

CD player and overhead projector: The CD player will be used during the day to introduce the students to various styles of music. It's great

to set a particular mood during group projects, individual work, or creative writing. Playing music—classical, jazz, pop, country, blues, and so forth—is great exposure for children.

Classroom rules and reminders: Post the rules up on the wall. If you remind students often enough, they'll get it. You are working for them to be successful, so give them the tools. Start this first day by pointing out the rules for the very first time (five thousand more to go).

Class telephone/intercom: The classroom phone is a valuable tool but should not be used without permission.

Classroom centers: Show students what a typical center looks like. Demonstrate how it works and explain when students will be assigned to centers for independent or cooperative group projects.

Tour of the school

Although many of the students have already been attending the school, there are many others who need an orientation to the site, and an introduction to important people. A new school can be an overwhelming experience for a child, and this is a perfect opportunity to reduce these anxieties.

This tour takes just a few minutes, and you may or may not choose to stop and talk to all the individuals in these places. It is a courtesy to let them know beforehand that you are coming by to visit.

Office: This is where the principal, assistant principal, school secretary, attendance clerk, and other personnel do their work to keep the school running smoothly.

Custodian's office: Point out where this important person organizes his or her work.

Nurse's office: Say "hi" to the nurse (and hope it's a long time until you visit again).

Bathrooms: Show both the closest bathroom to your room and an alternative site.

Cafeteria: Greet the cafeteria staff and quickly review the procedures and rules for using the cafeteria/lunchroom. For the first few days, escort your class to lunch and look for any insecure children that need assistance.

Auditorium: If your school has an auditorium, let students sit in the seats and get a feel for the place.

Library: Take a quick walk through and review expected behavior. This is one of the most important places in the school.

Computer lab: A very impressive tour stop. Explain to the children that the lab will play an important part in their education.

P.E. equipment checkout area (if not in the room): Offer an explanation of how to check out and return equipment.

Playground: Show the kindergarten play area, primary play area, and upper-grade play area.

Bus pickup and dropoff zone: Help children feel comfortable with this procedure. Be sure to let them know that if they get confused as to which bus to take, they are to ask one of the adults on bus duty for assistance.

Other special areas include the science lab, language lab, and band/orchestra room.

Buddies for New Children at School

You may wish to assign buddies to the children who are new to the school (excluding kindergarten). The buddies help the new students by taking them around the school and making them feel more comfortable in this new place. This is a great way to help students who enter the school in the middle of the year or track. It is almost like a junior mentor program.

Homework procedures

Spend some time talking about homework. Make it seem like important work that will also be interesting and challenging. Discuss why students do homework (reinforcement, independence, extension, and enrichment) and how it will benefit each learner. Discuss homework study habits, organization (some of this can be done later in the week), submitting work on time, and the reporting system for giving credit for completed homework. Let students know that if a couple of homework assignments are missing, their parents will get a note or call home. Show some examples of acceptable and unacceptable homework.

✦ *Our classroom is a special home away from home. It should be a place children want to be.*

A good time for pictures

Taking and displaying photographs of children working on projects or on independent work is a nice addition to the class bulletin board environment. Take a picture of each child either working alone or in small groups during the first day of school. Take an extra minute to be sure that every student is in at least one picture. No one wants to be left out! If you don't own a digital camera, think about purchasing one. In the meantime, buy a disposable camera. Have the film processed in one hour and have the photos displayed the next morning when the students come in. They will love it, and they will feel like the classroom is their place.

Read a story

Reading to students is a must at every grade level. This first day is an opportunity to read a story and use it as an assessment of specific behaviors and experience. Select an especially exciting story appropriate for the grade level. Read the book with great enthusiasm and feeling. Note those children that cannot stay focused or those that quickly lose interest. Note those students who seem to hang on every word and thirst for more. Watch for the wigglers, talkers, and distracters. Through your questions, take notice of those students who are operating at a high level of understanding versus those who are just getting the surface message.

Writing and language

Plan a short writing exercise to use for assessing initial writing and language. For those who speak limited English, have them write a sentence or paragraph in both languages. Try topics related to family, pets, sports, books, friends, movies, television, or recent events. Make the exercise brief and enjoyable without causing undue worry over punctuation, spelling, or grammar.

Art

Art is really an enjoyable classroom activity the first day. Design art lessons where all will

succeed. Avoid precise painting or drawing (replicating Rembrandt or designing Fabergé eggs). Try fun art like a "Who Am I?" collage, a small group mural depicting the scene from a classroom story, or some other enjoyable and nonthreatening activity. The products will be an attractive addition to the classroom "gallery."

P.E. game

Plan a Physical Education game that helps children get acquainted but that isn't too competitive or that places too much pressure on any one student to perform. Simply throwing a ball to a person, calling a name, throwing it again, running or walking around the circle, playing Simon Says, doing an obstacle course, climbing through hula hoops, throwing bean bags, hosting an imaginary scavenger hunt, exploring creative movement, and so forth, can all be a positive introduction to Physical Education.

Listening to music and learning a new song

Singing simple songs is fun and is a great group activity. Primary teachers can combine these songs to teach names, letters, numbers, days of the week, colors, sizes, shapes, and more. Dozens of commercial songbooks with CD and words are available at your local educational supply store or children's bookseller. Begin your collection early.

Children with special needs

Many of the students have special needs that will be addressed as a regular function of the classroom teacher. Explore in advance the special needs your children require and make every attempt to have the necessary resources available to meet these needs. You may need ideas, physical help, special equipment, varied materials, or simply patience. You chose this profession because you wanted to reach and teach children, all children.

Ask your colleagues

You need not invent all there is to know about the first day of school. Your grade-level colleagues have a treasure chest of proven activities for the first day. They will be complimented if you ask them for their ideas. You might say, "I have some ideas for the first day, but I really want this to be a special time for my students. Do you have any activities that you highly recommend?" That should get you more things to do than you could use in ten first days of school. Good luck, and keep adding to your repertoire. Before you know it, the day will be over and you will have completed your very first day of teaching. Good luck and have fun.

Final word for the day

After this first day, take a few minutes before dismissal to ask the students what they learned today. Make a list on the board. This is important so they can see the many activities they have engaged in. Tell them how much you enjoyed the first day of school. When the children go home and their parents ask what they did in school, they will have so much to say. It will be a great first day. Enjoy it. You only get one.

Sample First-Day Schedule Curriculum

8:00

Turn on CD with music. Help students find their assigned seats. Placement is based on information collected from the survey of the previous year's teacher. On each desk, place a pencil and an activity paper (such as a word search) that the students can work on immediately.

8:15

Ask all parents to leave.

Begin introductions.

Explain classroom discipline policy and rights.

Discuss expectations.

Explain flip cards (color coded).

Explain the reward system.

Talk about procedure in the classroom: handing out papers, collecting papers, using the pencil sharpener, the number system, using the classroom library, and so on.

Describe classroom jobs.

Talk about bathroom locations and procedures.

Get handwriting samples from all students.

10:00

Recess

10:45

Art activity; as the lesson is being taught, reinforce procedures and behavior expectations; showcase the products on the board.

11:15

Writing sample; introduce a topic through literature and ask students to respond; invite students to illustrate the story when finished.

12:00

Lunch

12:40

Read aloud to the class (the first selection should be fun).

1:00

Give a tour of the playground and review procedures for using equipment and getting water.

1:30

Recess

1:50

Review information that is being sent home to the parents.

2:05

Cleanup procedures and conversation.

2:20

Adjourn for the first day.

The First Week

The rest of the week offers reinforcement of what occurred on the first day, along with some new challenges. From the excitement expressed by the children when you pick them up from the yard on day two, you know they are feeling good about their new teacher and class. Much of what you will be doing the first week is to imprint the routines, clarify expectations, assess the abilities of your students, and design a program that will meet each child's needs.

No-shows that show up late

One of your early concerns on the second day (and for the remainder of the week) are no-shows: students who were on your roll sheet the first day but did not attend. In addition, you have students who will appear on the second day and beyond who were not registered. No one knew the students were coming. You will not be able to give these students a complete first day orientation on the second day, but you will be repeating most of the information in terms of reminders throughout the week. It will be very helpful to assign these newer students to a responsible buddy for assistance. Have buddies take them to the restroom, lunchroom, and nurse's office, for example. This works well and takes the pressure off you to remember to reteach everything. However, do spend the time finding the new student's seat and desk name cards, and provide them with materials to bring them up to speed. Being late the first week may be indicative of other problems; this might become apparent in the coming weeks.

Repeat, repeat, repeat

The first week is information overload time, and you will continue to repeat and repeat everything from the classroom rules to how to submit a class paper. If you remind students of everything, they will be successful.

Assessment and planning

Continue to assess students during the first week. Keep your eyes open, take notes, and assess all areas of academic, emotional, and social learning during this time. If you detect a problem that appears beyond what seems normal or reasonable, discuss it with your grade-level team or colleagues and then seek district resources for possible remediation. By the end of the first week, you will have a pretty clear picture of your class. Use this information to design your program.

✦ *Much of what you will be doing the first week is to imprint the routines, clarify expectations, assess the abilities of your students, and design a program that will meet each child's needs.*

Fill the walls and build your community

During this first week, you will be guiding your students through many lessons that will have products as an outcome. Students may produce murals, photographs, collages, written papers, class graphs, designs, or interest inventories. Many of these products will make good additions to the class environment. Attach the students' work to the walls and the classroom becomes theirs. Build your community with trust, enjoyment, meaningful projects, and fair treatment. Foster meaningful relationships between peers and the classroom community will flourish. Take the time to learn about each other. Enjoy one another, and soon you will respect and protect one another. This is the formula for success.

Peanut butter and crackers

Some of the younger students may forget their lunches, or their parents may not realize that the subsidized lunches do not take effect for a day or so. Thus it may be prudent to have some peanut butter and crackers and other snacks for those students. Check with the food services supervisor to see what other solutions are in place for this problem.

Textbooks and workbooks

Now that you have some sense of who is and isn't in your class, you may distribute the textbooks and workbooks. Help the children make covers out of large paper bags or butcher paper. Do not use newspaper because the print will come off on the cover and on clothing. Be sure the students understand that these books are a part of the important work you and they will be doing, and that they are responsible for their care.

Post your daily schedule

As the week continues, post your daily calendar each morning, so the children know what they are doing. Everything is new and different, so take pains to help them to understand what the day looks like and what will be occurring. Post important events and due dates, as well.

The first week blends into the second week, the second week into the third, and so on. Soon your classroom community has a strong sense of class spirit. The group takes on an importance and members feel great pride in their accomplishments. This is a good place to be.

Note: Do not promote "TGIF." Perhaps this sounds like a conservative plea, but when teachers model such verbal desires as "Thank Goodness It's Friday," it sends a clear signal to students that the real value of the week is the weekend. This message devalues what you are attempting to do. You want them to love school and be thankful that it is Monday morning. Do your part to support the school week to its fullest extent.

Calling home in the first three weeks

More and more schools are installing direct off-campus phone lines in classrooms. Not only is this a sign of the times, but it should be a required communications resource for the teaching professional. Aside from the security rationale, a telephone in the classroom can serve the teacher well for both preemptive parental contacts, timely parent queries, and immediate response to student behavioral or academic difficulties. If your classroom is not equipped with a telephone, be an advocate for waking up the district to the needs of teachers.

One of the best public relations strategies is to call the home of every child in the first three weeks of the school year. Since most parents or guardians only receive a phone call from the school or teacher when something is wrong, a call home is eagerly received once family members realize that the call was not precipitated by a negative incident. Simply introduce yourself and explain that the reason for your call is to let the parent or guardian know that Henrique is doing very well in your class. Or you may want to say that you are looking forward to working together and that Henrique has great potential to be a leader in the group. Once the shock has worn off, ask if there are any questions or concerns. Be aware that in some neighborhoods, teachers have never called home for anything positive. If you should need support from the parent or guardian in the future, you have already proved yourself a positive person and one who has the best interest of the child in mind. Incidentally, you are wise to call all the parents and guardians again later in the year, when spring restlessness begins to pervade the classroom.

Chapter 9

Back-to-School Night and Open House

I've never been to a "Back-to-School Night." What are the correct topics to talk about and how should the evening be structured?

Back-to-School Night: Making the Sale

As educators, we can be assured of a few things in the world of public schools and teaching. One, that school will begin each year in the fall, and two, that we will be hosting Back-to-School Night. This is the evening when we share all the amazing things that will happen in our class. With hopeful anticipation, parents and teachers make preparations for this event.

Caution for the beginning teacher

This is perhaps the most important presentation or lesson you will make for the year! This is an upbeat, face-full-of-smiles, action-packed, look-them-in-the-eye performance of commitment, dedication, professionalism, and confidence. This is the evening where every parent and guardian leaves your classroom knowing that your class is the best possible place on the planet for his or her child. How do you do it?

Let's start from the beginning. It's two weeks before the big event. Back-to-School Night might actually be at the end of the first week, which many schools are now choosing, for obvious reasons. Why wait until the fourth or fifth week to share with parents what you will be doing or what you have been doing? You are assured that the school will send home notices to parents but it's not enough to rely on the school to do this. Make up your own invitation (see next page). Select a color of paper which you will use from this day on to send home special notices and communiqués to parents, aunts and uncles, and other responsible guardians. Every time that piece of paper is carried home and dumped on the table, parents will know that the message is from you. It works!

Offer the invitation in several languages for the non–English-speaking population in your community. Find someone who speaks those languages you do not and have him or

Back-to-School Night Invitation

Dear Parents or Guardian:

Although you have already received an invitation for Back-to-School Night, on behalf of the school, let me personally invite you to attend this most important meeting on Tuesday evening, September 12th.

After only a few days together, we are having a wonderful time in the third grade forming our new classroom community. All of the students are excited and working hard to make this year the best ever in their educational career.

By attending Back-to-School Night, you will learn about all the exciting activities we will be engaged in during the year. You will learn about our special reading program, our upcoming science fair, computers and technology projects, our mathematics study, and of course, the field trips, which will add an extra exciting dimension to this already full program.

We will share our expectations about homework, behavior, and academics. You will be able to see firsthand the interesting projects we have been working on and examples of future endeavors.

I look forward to meeting you on the 12th. Refreshments will be served just prior to the program.

Sincerely,

Mrs./Ms./Mr. _____

her write your letter. It shows that you are thinking of the family.

Preparing for your visitors

Your classroom already reflects the richness and excitement of what you are doing, so special preparations for Back-to-School Night should not be a major issue. You and your students may want to do a bit of extra cleaning, just as you would before any social gathering.

Be sure your bulletin boards reflect all that is going on in the classroom. Take photographs of your students and display them for parents, relatives, or guardians to view. Try to do this during various activities within the first two weeks of school. Parents will see the pictures from across the room and will stampede to see a photo of their sons or daughters. Be sure you have at least two of each child interacting in the instructional setting.

Display the individual work of each student. This is what parents want to see more than anything else. If there is no identity with their children, the evening has far less meaning. Don't forget name tags for the desks to indicate where each child sits during the day.

One table should have sign-up sheets for parents who want to volunteer and for those who indicate they want to have a conference. Of course, conferencing is not appropriate at this event, so refer parents to the sign-up sheet. (Return their request in a day or so.) Light refreshments are a nice touch. Finally, be sure to have your classroom management plan posted prominently so that your intentions are very clear. You will refer to this wall chart during your presentation.

Dress well, have some soft music playing, and be ready with your best, brightest, and warmest smile. None of this is critical in itself, but you are establishing a friendly, welcoming, positive climate. Welcome each parent or guardian as he or she enters the room with a handshake and "hello," and direct the visitor to the desk or area that is normally occupied by his or her child. The "overflow" parents, if there are any, can stand on the side or in the back.

When everyone seems to have arrived, start your presentation. Begin by asking people to have a seat, and thank them for attending this important event. Introduce yourself as "Ms., Mrs., or Mr." and let everyone know how delighted you are to be working with this wonderful group of children. Do ***not*** offer information about this being your first year of teaching and that you are nervous, still learning, and unsure of a myriad topics related to the school culture and education. Parents do not need or want to hear this, even if it is the truth. Offer nothing that would raise doubts as to your professional competency. During the brief question period at the conclusion, if this topic should come up, answer with "I have a variety of experiences working with children, and we will be doing exciting and memorable learning activities in this class." Explain that in this class the children will grow tremendously in academic, social, and physical development.

> ✦ *This is the evening where every parent and guardian leaves your classroom knowing that your class is the best possible place on the planet for his or her child. How do you do it?*

At this juncture, begin to talk about each subject area and give a brief description of what the children will be doing. Have the subject material and samples of student work spread out on tables against the walls of the room. Walk from one area to another picking up the materials, briefly explaining the content, objectives, and key activities, and move on to the next area. If you are excited, your audience will be excited.

Share with parents and guardians your plans for field trips and other exciting thematic projects. ***Try not to use jargon or educational terms that may be unfamiliar to the parents.*** This may also be the time to announce that your classroom accepts monetary donations from local community groups, businesses, and industry. You might go on to say that with extra funding, the class would be able to take additional field trips, buy computer programs, or have special events. ***Be sure that discussing monetary contributions does not conflict with the school or district policies and***

regulations. Do not, under any circumstances, accept cash, or a check made payable to you. You can ask your school principal about the correct procedure. Avoid any appearances of impropriety or conflict of interest.

Remember, parents and guardians have varied backgrounds, expectations, and perceptions of what a teacher should be and what they want to have happen to their child. Craft this evening program so that all parents come away knowing that their children will have a year of positive and productive experiences.

Following your curriculum tour, return to the head of the classroom and be prepared to answer a few questions. Remember, the questions and responses should be of interest to all in attendance, and not be about an individual student or a specific agenda. (Refer those specific questions to your conference sign-up sheet). Before answering any question, be sure to restate the question so that everyone is clear about what has been asked. Answer as best as you can and, if a question is beyond your experience, let the parent know you will get back to him or her on it. Never argue with a parent who may have a personal agenda. If you feel you are being ambushed, move along. Continue to assure parents that everything possible will be done to make this a wonderful educational journey for their children.

At the designated time—and never beyond that time—emphasize again that you all share the common objective of providing positive educational experiences for the children in your class. Then thank everyone for attending and send them on their way. Continue with good-byes and a few follow-ups, one-on-one questions, and comments. Regardless of who is still there, thank them again and walk them to the door. Herd the stragglers out, if necessary, turn out the lights, and walk with someone to the office or to your car.

Reflect on the evening. Smile and feel good as you drive for home. Tomorrow morning the students will be at your door with excitement and questions about this special event.

As a final reminder, be prepared, plan well, and truly weave the magic. Share yourself with these parents and guardians. They are sharing their children with you.

Note: For those on a year-round schedule, Back-to-School Night may occur during the year based on the assigned track. The content of the presentation remains the same.

Reminders of preparations/materials for Back–to–School Night:

- ***Child care arrangements for teachers' children (if required)***
- ***Personal wardrobe check for appropriate attire***
- ***Outline of your presentation***
- ***Time awareness of evening activities***
- ***Class management posters and handouts***
- ***Samples of student work (posted or displayed)***
- ***Guest book (prominently placed near the entrance)***
- ***Review of parent/guardian names before the event***
- ***Name desk cards crafted by students***

- *Handout reviewing key objectives, philosophy, activities*
- *Handout on student behavior expectations*
- *Handout on student academic performance expectations*
- *Handout on classroom management plan*
- *Note with your school's E-mail address and phone number*
- *Photos of students prominently displayed in the room*
- *Translators if necessary*
- *Translation of handouts (if required)*
- *Flowers for teacher's desk*
- *CD player and soft, neutral music*
- *Room freshener*
- *Displays of books, pictures, and charts for each subject area (to assist you in your presentation)*
- *Sign-up list for potential classroom volunteers*
- *Sign-up list for requested conferences*
- *Sign-up list for field trip volunteers (remember, you will select who goes)*
- *Donation tear-off/return sheet available on table*
- *Field trip information*
- *Cookies, coffee, soda, juice*
- *Teacher's name, instructional aide, room number, and grade level posted on the classroom door*
- *E-mail address*

Open House: The Celebration

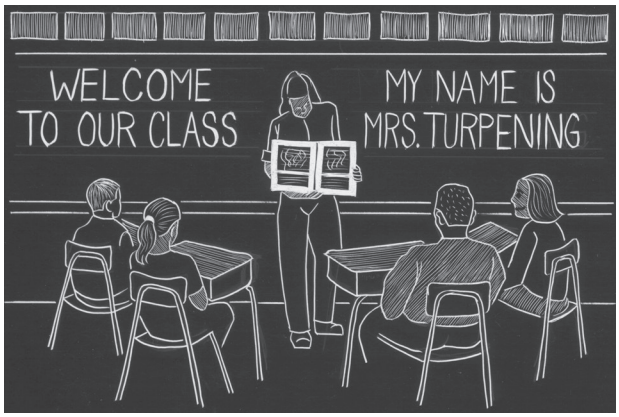
Open House is a celebration of all those events you said you would do during Back-to-School Night. It is the culmination of the successes of your learners. It is an evening where students, teachers, and parents proudly reflect upon all that's been accomplished.

Open House usually occurs in the last six weeks of the school year. This evening is informal, generally with students, parents, and friends stopping by to pay tribute and see all of the projects and reminisce about the day-to-day activities in your classroom. Students will scurry here and there around the classroom sharing and showing all the wonderful artifacts that represent the culture of the first or fourth grade. Some visitors may be on a shopping tour for next year's teacher. That's all right. You may even have some student teachers or student observers who are looking for good ideas to use when they initiate their careers as beginning teachers.

Most Open House events are passive in nature. Student work is displayed, computers are turned on, and video displays may be offering

a personal view of the last nine months. This is okay, but none of this maximizes the time or event. What are the alternatives?

An ***active*** Open House engages students as performers, facilitators, leaders, docents, and hosts. It is what the name implies: something active. When planning this type of Open House, utilize all of the passive displays that support the accomplishments of the children during the past months. But in addition to the gallery approach, add an active ingredient. In one corner of the room, you might have a small group of students in costume performing daily activities of the Colonial period. In another corner, students might be writing the class newspaper, while along the wall, students are searching the Internet. Another group could be performing science experiments, replicating some of the activities completed during the year. A few students can be assigned as guides or hosts/hostesses, taking parents on minitours of these classroom events. An active Open House brings the evening alive, enhances students' self-esteem, and allows parents and guardians to have an "instant" view of the workings of the classroom. You can adjust the activities and subjects to be consistent with your class and curriculum.



Open House checklist:

- ***Double up on the announcement. It may be that the school sends home announcements for Open House, but you should do so as well.***
- ***Let parents and guardians know the special things they will be seeing.***

Active Open House checklist:

- ***Decorate the room and let the children assist you in putting up bulletin boards. Student work should be everywhere.***
- ***Play some festive music in the background to establish the climate that you desire.***
- ***Display photographs of the children working on various projects. Have pictures from the first weeks as well as the last.***
- ***Assign students as hosts and hostesses or have student volunteers assist you in setting up. These tasks are great self-esteem builders.***
- ***Teach the students how to be charming hosts and hostesses. They should have a welcome greeting and be able to introduce themselves as well as giving directions on the evenings activities. They will need to practice these skills.***
- ***Provide practice by asking some anticipated questions. This will assist students on the night of the Open House, and also reinforce your content teaching.***
- ***If the event is "active," have the students wear name tags. A written program should be provided so the parents and guardians know what they are seeing and who is participating. Children feel very important when their name appears in the program.***

Active Open House Celebration Invitation

Dear Parent or Guardian:

Mark your calendar for our Open House Celebration! Join us on May 28th as our class celebrates a wonderful year of excitement and learning. On this evening, we will have a "Living Open House" with your children demonstrating what they have learned in all areas of the curriculum. Get a rare glimpse of a Native American village and its inhabitants engaging in day-to-day activities. See scientists working on an experiment changing liquids to solids. Find our weekly classroom newspaper staff getting ready for the next edition. We guarantee that you will learn some new things and see your children in a new light!

Please join us as we celebrate the excitement of this year's learning adventure. We look forward to having you as our guests.

Sincerely,

The Fifth-Grade Class

- ***During the year, take short videos of the students doing a variety of activities. The film can be set up and running so those who are interested can check it out. Assign a student to rewind the tape when it is finished and start it again. This display is always a big hit with both students and parents. Digital photos can also be displayed on a computer.***
- ***Share with the parents the pride you feel for all that the students have accomplished.***
- ***Set up the computers and have the students demonstrating interesting programs for parents to see.***
- ***Set up displays in subject areas such as social studies, art, math, and writing, along with any available science displays from the science fair.***
- ***If it is a warm evening, don't forget to turn on the air conditioning or place fans in the corners of the classroom.***
- ***Keep smiling and enjoy all that you and your students have done!***

Chapter 10

The Community and Other Resources

What community resources are available to enrich our classroom experience?

Community—Business Links

As teachers, we have great ideas for classroom activities and events. These activities can be enhanced with support in both word and funding from outside sources. It's not that teachers should become fund-raisers, and it's not that you can't do great things without outside funding. However, if you are doing things that are truly meaningful for your students, let people know about them so that the support will be there when you need it. Here's a case in point.

A teacher who has accomplished amazing things with her fourth graders, especially in the area of technology, shared her plans with parents at Back-to-School Night. This teacher's enthusiasm was so obvious and the activities generated so much excitement that several people came forward that evening and offered to pay for buses to be used on field trips! The following day, a parent called and offered corporate financial sponsorship for an off-campus activity. This was by no means an affluent community. Yet, the message was clear: special things were going to happen, and the parents were making a choice to be a part of these plans.

In other examples, a local business donated a cell phone for a telecommunications classroom activity. Other local businesses supplied teachers with food, classroom supplies, admission to special events, computer hardware, software, and more.

Realize that not only are you looking for sponsors, but also that many sponsors, such as local businesses and larger corporations, are looking for you. Many organizations find community involvement good from a tax standpoint, and great for positive community relations, improving the local economy, and raising internal morale. For many

businesspeople, it is an opportunity to give back to the community in which they work and live.

It's not always only about money. Local resources can be guest speakers, volunteers, story readers, occupational models, E-mail buddies, pen pals, big brothers and sisters, or much-needed classroom and school boosters. Most local businesses don't really know what is going on behind the walls at the local school. If you let them in on the secret, they will be pleasantly surprised. Think about how you might want to involve the community, start with a simple plan, and work from there.

Getting Your Free Turkey

Did you know that any teacher can get a free turkey at Thanksgiving simply by asking? If you visit the local supermarket and ask the store manager for a free turkey to cook and serve in your class, you will generally hear the query, "How many pounds?"

How is this possible? Because only a handful of teachers actually ask. Thus, if you are the teacher that asks for whatever it might be—a turkey at the local market, a phone line from the principal for telecommunications activities, a bus for a special field trip, or funding for a unique project—you will most likely be rewarded for your efforts. The reason is the same: very few ask. Now is the time to plan special projects that other teachers wouldn't or don't have the interest or energy to attempt. Then, with a clear design, make your request in writing for the appropriate support. Who could possibly say no to innovation, dedication, good teaching, and positive learning outcomes? Try it soon. It really does work.

Working the Local Media

Education, specifically teaching, needs all the free and positive press it can get. You will discover that the local media loves to cover positive school events, especially those that are different from past stories. They have seen pig races, eggs dropped in parachutes out of second-story windows, and the school principal who will sit on the roof if the students read a million minutes. ***Look at what your class is or could be doing and see if it is newsworthy.*** Stories where children are involved with current technology or doing something for charity are always good stories. Social studies (thematic hands-on units) is always in vogue. Students dressed in period costumes, whether as pioneers, railroad workers, archaeologists, famous artists, or contemporary politicians, are excellent for a photo and print story.

How does a teacher get this kind of coverage? First, check with your school and district administration to be sure it is approved. Then, pick up the phone and call the local newspaper, asking for the education or community desk. Give a brief overview of what you are doing and explain why you think it will make an interesting and positive story for the community. Agree on a time and place for a visit by a staff reporter and photographer. Be sure to have something for them to photograph, such as a culminating activity or hands-on learning that is very visual.

Prior to the arrival of the news team, be sure to write up a summary of the activity, goals, and so forth. Include the names of the main adult players, such as you, the principal, and any guests, and what you hope to accomplish. Don't forget your phone number for further questions. Include actual quotes from you or others.

This makes it easier for the reporter who may know very little about teaching and education to use your ideas to assist in writing the story. Without advance copy, you are taking a chance that your classroom event will be written about incorrectly, will be trivialized, or will appear very different from what you had intended. Remember, you only get one crack at a story!

The publicity is good for you, the students, the school, the principal, the district, and the superintendent. Everyone wins. Few teachers do this, and it is the easiest way to do something good for our profession. And yes, the students feel great pride having their curriculum activity displayed for all to see.

Finite Versus Infinite Resources

Teachers have always instructed students to use the learning resources that are immediately available. They search the school library, district resource centers, community library, bookstores, and resource people to solve a problem or answer a question. When a student selects a topic for the classic school report, he or she darts quickly to the set of outdated encyclopedias. Students are familiar and comfortable with these materials, know where they are located, and can usually be assured that what they need to find will be contained within. Since students know of their existence and the type of information they contain, these materials become finite in nature. Along with these finite sources is the concept of the answer. It is the classroom teacher who is supposed to always possess the answer.

For the students in the finite classroom, there is a series of questions and problems posed by the teacher, for which the "correct" answer or response is always a known entity.

If the teacher wants his or her students to become independent, self-initiating learners by seeking new ways to discover, using their decision-making skills, then he or she must think about new ways of teaching and learning. As we move from learning with limits to learning without limits, or infinite learning, we cross the threshold and liberate our learners to a new world associated with technology and electronic on-line resources. The face of conventional education is changing, and teachers need to begin to think differently about this process and what occurs in their classrooms. This change is one of the most exciting innovations of all time.

Consider this example.

Our students are interested in the Hopi Indians of the Southwest United States. We have used the conventional resources and have compiled the traditional collection of data related to history, customs, culture, and so forth. Our students want to know about the life of today's Hopi, particularly of students their age. The school encyclopedia is outdated and neither the conventional texts nor the library contain this specific information. No local resource can answer our inquiry. We turn to the computer as our infinite resource and search the Internet, using the key words and quotation marks "Hopi student K–12" to begin the search. We are quickly provided with a list of sites or Internet addresses (URLs) related to our query. We select a Hopi elementary school, locate its E-mail address, and begin a dialogue with Hopi students. Through E-mail, we learn about what students do each day, their customs, ideas, beliefs, similarities, and differences. We also make new friends.

This was a source we didn't know existed before we moved to the infinite realm. Our world is truly open for us as teachers and students to explore and share.

We combine the best of the finite resources with the excitement and challenge of the infinite resources, revealing new ways of thinking, learning, and teaching.

Reading, Reading, Reading

The question of improving reading skills continues to be one of the most visible reform activities. Whether it's in traditional education, phonics, whole language, and/or self-selected reading, we know of only one reality. If a young person is going to learn to read, to improve his or her ability to do so, and enjoy it, only one activity is going to be effective, and that is to read, read, and read some more!

Children do very little reading when they engage in "popcorn" reading. Popcorn reading is the classroom event where one student begins reading a paragraph aloud and then calls upon another member of the class to read from that point through another paragraph. The goal is for the other students to follow along and read silently while the student reads aloud. The reality is that the student who is reading is often prompted by the teacher, other students, or through the process of "closure," (filling in the words using context clues). For years, nonreaders have "gotten by," developing shrouds of deception using the "popcorn" method. Most of the class does not follow along and the majority of those who do, only do so in order to know where they are if they are selected. After students have read, the odds are slim that they will be called on again. Thus, their interest and enthusiasm wanes.

After watching this literacy ritual, it quickly becomes clear that few of the children actually engage in reading for more than 45 seconds to a minute. It doesn't take a three-million-dollar government grant to figure out that this is not a sufficient time for students to improve their reading. It would appear prudent to embark upon a plan that would engage students in reading throughout the day, at school and at home.

The classroom needs to be a reading culture. Children should be reading alone and in groups, aloud and silent: food labels, newspapers, magazines, comics, book club selections, photocopies, classics, and so on. Just reading and reading. This should earn them pizza parties, swimming outings, trips to lunch at fast-food restaurants, and prizes of all sizes and shapes, including, of course, books that they can call their own. The classroom walls should have charts, graphs, signs, and pictures all promoting reading and clearly documenting the success of the class. The entire class will be mobilized to read. You should also read to the class every day. This creates a reading-centered classroom. Here, the children become real readers and nothing can stop them!

Chapter 11

Assessment

What assessment alternatives are available that provide meaning to the process?

Student Assessment and Report Cards

Report cards are one of those things that continue to wreak havoc with what we are trying to do. We ask ourselves, why use report cards? What do they really do? Who are they really for? What do they really tell us and how do they offer the student any meaningful information?

In the best of all worlds, we would personally assess all student work, diagnose the degree of competency, and prescribe for future learning. Okay—now welcome to the real world.

Students, parents, schools, politicians, and most teachers are interested in those alpha symbols we call grades. Whether they accomplish any good or not, we assign them year after year. You will, too. Be as fair to parents as you are to students and let them understand your expectations for their children. It should be clearly understood that grades and their application vary greatly from district to district and state to state.

Report-card grades should accurately translate to academic achievement and performance. They should be used only as a general indicator of the level of performance over a sustained period of time. When report card grades are used to indicate improvement, or to raise self-esteem or motivation, the indicator loses inherent meaning (to indicate performance within a group).

Even if you are required to assign letter grades on quarterly, tri-semester, or semester report cards, do not lose sight of their purpose: to inform the student and parent of where the student is on a continuum toward academic excellence.

Interestingly, even when schools have elected to forgo grades in favor of narratives and conferences, both parents and teachers continue

to translate these new assessment reports into traditional grades. It is not uncommon for a parent who is informed that his or her child has "attained exceptional ability in the use of both written and oral language" to still ask the teacher, "Is that the equivalent of an 'A'?" Even teachers will "translate" the terms to the traditional A–F designations. It is difficult to truly find your way out of this box.

Note: Each teacher has his or her usual way of doing things. Some write very lengthy comments on report cards while others limit comments to a few words. In still other cases, teachers simply write in a grade and check a box with descriptors. This is becoming increasingly more common as "grade reports" are generated and mailed by data-processing computers. Ask your colleagues what they do and request to see some samples. You may wish to move in a different direction, but at the least, you'll see what is out there.

Portfolios and Reality

What is an educational portfolio? Both teacher-education students and elementary-school students are increasingly being asked to develop portfolios as tools by which the teacher can assess students' accomplishments.

The portfolio is akin to what an artist carries to a gallery while in search of a place to exhibit his or her work. Inside the portfolio are found many samples of the artist's accomplishments. These pieces may reflect the artist's work over time and may demonstrate changes in style, technique, interest, or subject. Similarly, samples of a student's work are collected and assembled in a portfolio.

The container for this work may take many forms, depending on the types of materials included. Whether it is a box, drawer, large case, file cabinet, or red wagon, the portfolio contains samples of writing, art, reading (perhaps on tape), reflections, assessments, computer projects, research, and so forth. All attempt to offer a portrait of the student in the academic setting.

It is generally the student who decides what shall be included in the portfolio. However, the student and teacher can negotiate its contents—both inclusions and exclusions. The portfolio can serve as a valuable vehicle in both teacher-led and student-led parent conferences.

Although there is no one way that a portfolio must be constructed, the following will serve as a guide for you.

- ***The portfolio is for the student.***
- ***It is a truly authentic assessment.***
- ***It can be simple or complex.***
- ***It can contain student-selected work and/or teacher-selected work.***
- ***It not only demonstrates product but process.***
- ***Portfolios work well with any student at any level.***

The portfolio is really the way to go if you want to have an authentic record of what the student has accomplished and a vehicle for planning future endeavors. More and more teachers like the idea, but many teachers argue that, under current curriculum and scheduling demands, they lack the time or energy to do the organizational work needed to make the portfolio happen. We shall see.

The electronic portfolio

The electronic portfolio, sometimes referred to as the computer portfolio, is perfect for our complex classrooms. One computer disk or file contains the works of the student over a period of time. You can quickly and accurately archive the student's voice reading new books, capture still and video pictures to disk, and scan samples of art, penmanship, writing, math, or any other academic artifact available. Students can lead their own progress conferences or teachers can position the computer during a parent conference and use this data to effectively provide concrete examples of student work and progress. There are currently a number of electronic portfolios on the market at very reasonable prices.

Designing the portfolio

There are many ways to design portfolios for your students. Here are some of your options:

- ***Showcase portfolios exhibit only the best work of the student.***
- ***Progress portfolios include not only the polished product, but drafts and process along the way.***

- ***Regulated evaluation portfolios consist of generally the same tasks, activities, products, and criteria from student to student. This is similar to the traditional evaluation process.***
- ***Process portfolios are collections of work that are generally a part of a larger whole. This type of assessment offers less information related to standards than the other choices.***

Content

The materials and artifacts included in the portfolio depend upon how the collection is categorized. As mentioned above, the format and type of student work that can be included is varied and should not be limited to the following examples:

- ***Individual reports and projects***
- ***Cooperative group projects***
- ***Various products indicated by new technologies (multimedia, search printouts, successful documentation of simulations, data bases)***

- ***Artwork and other creative visual projects***
- ***Photographs of the student at work***
- ***Videotapes (student-produced or teacher-directed)***
- ***Audiotapes of relevant student projects or reports***
- ***Student comments and reflection***
- ***Tests and conventional assessment instruments***
- ***Teacher observation***
- ***Peer observation and evaluation***

Get organized and see if the portfolio concept will work for you and your class. More and more schools are moving in this direction. Be sure you are ready.

Chapter 12

Parent Conferences and Student-led Conferences

How can I make the conference an event where everyone leaves feeling it was worthwhile?

Parent Conferences

Parent conferences are a traditional part of what we do. We would love to tell you that they always proceed smoothly, that the parents or guardians will love you for what you say, and that the result will be a positive change in the educational life of the students. Sometimes it is this way. Here is the premise of conferences, followed by a description of the main forms of teacher-parent conferences.

Most teachers would agree that the parent or guardian has the right to know what is going on in the educational life of his or her child. It is the right of the teacher to inform the parent or guardian of the student's progress, or lack thereof, over a given period of time. And finally, it is the institution's right to expect a change or positive refocus as an outcome of newly defined standards established at this meeting. The result is an improved educational experience for the student.

Generally, school conferences fall under one of these categories:

- ***Regular internal reporting conferences***
- ***Problem solving conferences***
- ***Special information reporting conferences***
- ***Spontaneous conferences***

Regular interval reporting conferences are established according to the school calendar and are scheduled for every student in the school. They are to be held once or twice during the academic year. These are usually about 20 minutes long and provide an overview of a child's progress in all subject areas, and include social and emotional behavior. This conference provides parents and guardians with up-to-date information about their children's school experience, and shows diagnostic indicators and prescriptive incentives. These conferences

may be teacher-directed, and may have the student present all of the time, or part of the time, or not at all.

Problem-solving conferences may be called by either the parent or teacher to review a specific problem or to attempt to identify a problem based on specific behaviors or symptoms. This conference is usually arranged through a phone call from either the teacher or parent at any time during the school year that such a need arises.

Special information reporting conferences are usually requested by a parent or guardian to receive specific information about a child's progress beyond or in the interim of the regular school conferences. It may entail a complete review of the child's progress, or a review of progress only in those areas that have been requested.

Spontaneous conferences are accomplished when a parent or guardian meets you at the door before or after school and asks if he or she may have a conference related to his or her child. You will have to assess the rationale for this request and make a determination whether: (1) you have the time at that moment to meet with the parent; (2) due to circumstances and the need for preparation, it would be more advantageous to set up an appointment; or, (3) because of the mood, climate, attitude, or issues of safety, it would be prudent to obtain one or more other human resources (principal, assistant principal, psychologist, security) prior to the onset of a meeting.

How to Conduct a Conference

Always be organized and well prepared. Know very well the student you are discussing, have relevant materials (including a sample of the student's work—in all subjects), and know what it is you are going to say and recommend. Have notes at your disposal to assist you. Think of the conference as another lesson—one in which you will communicate the progress of a student. The twenty-minute session should have an opening, a major content area, and closure.

Effective openings

When it is time for the conference, invite the parent or guardian in, and show them to a seat. Try not to establish barriers: sit on the same side of a rectangular table or at a round table. Shake hands, smile, and welcome the parent warmly. Quickly express your appreciation for the visitor attending, and state your objective:

"It's so nice to see you again. I'm looking forward to sharing Michael's progress this year in fourth grade."

Or,

"I know Carla has shared with you many of the activities we have been doing, so this is just an opportunity to review her progress. We'll also have the opportunity to answer any questions or concerns you might have."

The content

This is the core of the conference. Review the student's standing in each of the subject areas, as well as his or her emotional and social growth over the period of review. Offer a clear picture of test scores, classroom behavior, task completion, analysis, leadership, attitude, potential, as well as any diagnostic-prescriptive information that would be helpful. Begin very positively. Show examples of recent work. Discuss the student's positive qualities and contributions. Show examples of actual writing, math, essays, and artwork. Discuss the "total" student, including how he or she works with others and what occurs at recess, lunch, P.E., and in class social contacts. After the initial picture is clear, discuss areas in which you would like to see further growth occur. Again, be clear, provide examples (do not use comparisons with other students in the class), and show your optimism with regard to this objective. Explain how this growth will come about, the role you, as the teacher, will play, other available school resources, and the role the parent can play. Let the parent know what you believe will be the outcome at the end of the year if your objectives are met. Don't paint a glowing picture, if, indeed, the prognosis is poor or the student is in need of long-term remediation. Use the cues from parent expressions, questions, and responses to assess understanding.

You might have some generic tip sheets available to give parents. These can review ways to read to the child, interesting television programs to watch, places to take children to increase experience, homework study suggestions, and so forth.

Ask the parent or guardian if he or she has questions or observations to add. Listen carefully to any concerns that are voiced, accepting what the parent says and feels. Respond appropriately, but don't be defensive or combative. When you feel the conference has covered what is necessary, move to closure.

Effective closure

Closure is critical for several reasons. First, you must limit the time of each conference because others are waiting. Second, most of what can and should be said and heard can easily be covered in the time provided. Third, this is the part of the conference where you summarize the conference, make recommendations, and determine when and how you will follow up. Remember that you are in charge of the conference. Many parents may continue to talk longer than is necessary. Often, this conversation is repetitive and becomes counterproductive. Keep track of the time, and once you have summarized all points, including the parent's view, review the recommendations to determine who will follow through with the student and when and how you will report back. Perhaps you will suggest that the parent read regularly with the student and that television time after 9:00 p.m. be discouraged or discontinued. Establish that in four weeks, you will phone the parent to solicit a report on the home effort and provide a school update.

Thank the parent or guardian for coming to the conference and escort him or her to the door. Inform the next person waiting that you will be with him or her in one moment. Reenter the room, jot down a few notes, and you're on again.

Preconference reminders/checklist:

- *Be sure you receive a master list of conferences, with times, names, and phone numbers.*
- *Send home reminders with your students (translated if necessary). They should provide a brief overview of what will be occurring. This reduces parent/guardian anxiety.*
- *Arrange adult chairs around a table. Make allowances for more than one person attending.*
- *Place chairs outside the room for those waiting.*
- *Be sure the room is clean and orderly.*
- *If it is very warm, have the air conditioner or fans operating.*
- *Wear clothing that is professional, comfortable, and not intimidating.*
- *Have a clock within view.*
- *Have a sign on the door indicating the room number, your name, and instructions (written in a friendly tone) to wait until called.*
- *Have an interpreter available if necessary.*
- *Avoid barriers between you and the parents. Sit on the same side of the table.*
- *Review student work/progress and have notes on each student accessible (grade book, attendance information).*
- *Have writing materials for notetaking.*
- *Have textbooks and other assigned materials available for reference.*
- *Have quickly accessible samples of student work in folders.*
- *Have some generic tip sheets to offer parents and guardians.*
- *Have water and paper cups.*
- *Have breath savers or hard candy.*

Effective behaviors:

- *Welcome the parent or guardian with a firm handshake or what might be culturally correct.*
- *Be friendly, welcoming, and appreciative for participating in the conference.*
- *Be positive throughout (even if you need to be direct).*
- *Use direct eye contact.*
- *Control your environment so that the conference is not interrupted.*
- *Do not permit other children or adults (including instructional aides) to be present during the conference.*
- *Show respect to the parent.*
- *Do not be condescending.*
- *Listen completely to what the parent has to say before responding. Only interrupt when what is being said is continuously repetitive or moves off track.*
- *Keep discussion on track. Permit discussion of other issues only when they are relevant to the child, family, or home, and have an impact on the child's schooling.*
- *Use examples of student work, records of grades, attendance, and so forth.*

- *Do not place blame.*
- *Do not make comparisons with other class members, only to students at a similar grade level.*
- *You need not respond to everything mentioned.*
- *Try not to be defensive, even if a parent or guardian appears unhappy with you.*
- *Have resources available for referral.*
- *Defuse any anger by showing interest, agreeing with feelings, and showing real concern throughout the conference.*
- *Do not use acronyms or jargon that the parent or guardian may not understand.*
- *Always have hope and maintain a positive approach.*
- *Be straightforward but not insensitive.*
- *Try to understand what the parent or guardian is feeling. Egos are involved.*
- *Remember, parents and guardians are not adversaries. Welcome them as partners.*
- *Be as clear and concise as possible and check for understanding.*
- *Express your expectations for each child, remembering that success is greater if everyone knows what is expected and what is possible.*

Some related tips:

- *Phone calls and notes home during the year establish positive feelings that parents or guardians will bring to the conference.*
- *Never allow yourself to be "trapped" in a conference by a parent or guardian; be in control and set the limits.*
- *Be sure that you and the parent or guardian establish a plan for follow-through.*
- *If you encounter hostile parents or guardians, seek assistance immediately. Never put yourself in jeopardy. Make up an excuse such as, "We will be meeting in the main office."*
- *Never schedule conferences when you are alone or isolated at the school.*
- *If parents or guardians do not show up for the conference, send them a letter (and keep a copy for your records) requesting that they reschedule. Keep the tone positive.*
- *Remember that you and the parents or guardians should have common goals.*
- *Understand that conferences may mean hardships for single parents, guardians, parents who work, or those who do not feel comfortable in the school setting.*
- *If a parent or guardian blames you for the problems of his or her child, inform the principal and let the parent know that he or she can request a teacher change. (He or she almost never does.)*
- *Assess your skills as a facilitator of the conference and note what you might do differently next time.*
- *Be sure to follow up with a note, referral, or other resources when necessary.*

At the conclusion of your conferences, you should feel that the time and effort were well spent.

Student-led Conferences: a Primer

Student-led conferences are increasing in popularity. It should be noted that schools that utilize this procedure spend a significant amount of time and energy training students and teachers in this process. Teachers generally find student-led conferences to be very beneficial.

The chief objective of a student-led conference is that the student assume primary ownership for the quality of his or her academic work, the plans for growth development, and the reporting of personal progress. The implementation of this plan can range from the simple to the complex. Students can assume a small role in this process or take total responsibility. The important point is that students make decisions and learn to come to an understanding of their personal worth. The children feel important because they are important. Self-esteem rises because they are making a significant contribution to their education and understanding. This process is an important piece in the student-centered classroom. Adequately prepare students so that they feel comfortable with this process. Your students, regardless of their age, must have a clear understanding of why they are engaging in this process. Offer them a clear, concise explanation. Let them know they are assuming a great responsibility and trust related to their schooling. Provide students with a demonstration of a very brief student-led conference.

Key areas of preparation for student-led conferences:

- ***Notify parents that this process is being utilized. This may occur at Back-to-School Night, via memorandum, or at a special meeting.***
- ***The explanation should be clear and thorough, and should be conveyed in languages spoken within the community.***
- ***Provide ample opportunity for parent or guardian feedback and questions. This should occur early in the school year so parents and guardians will have time to feel comfortable with this procedure.***
- ***Prior to the actual conference, an invitation should go home from both the student and the teacher to provide additional confidence.***

Be able to identify the components of the conference. Instruct students on these components. Model, discuss, and review this information using a multimodal approach to teaching and learning. Then practice having the conference. Through guided practice using role-playing, have students observe and practice a simulated student-led conference.

On the conference day, have the student meet the parent or guardian, conduct appropriate introductions, review the objectives of the conference, share his or her portfolio (see Chapter 11), review each area, provide a dialogue related to strengths, discuss areas of necessary growth, provide an overall assessment, set future goals, and offer plans for follow-up. The final action will be to ask the parent or guardian for feedback, including questions or clarification.

At the conclusion, the student will escort the parent or guardian out of the room, and prepare to process feedback with you.

Following the conference, the student will meet with you to discuss how he or she feels the conference went, whether the key objectives were met, any obstacles that may have surfaced, and what the student might do differently next time. In addition to the individual post-conference session, a group session can be conducted after the last conference of each day.

This last phase will consist of writing to thank the parent for participating, reviewing the process, and setting new goals and timelines as outlined (or modified) from the conference. These timelines should be attached to the calendar, and progress updates should be noted. At the conclusion of the school year, participant assessment should be completed to see if the students, parents, guardians, and teacher perceived this process to be beneficial and if, indeed, the objectives were met.

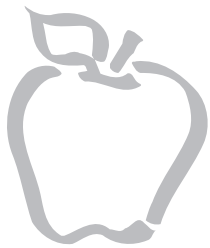
The student-led conference can be a very simple way for kindergarten students to share their work with parents and guardians. Upper-grade students can operate at very high levels of delivery.

We mention student-led conferences at this juncture so that new teachers who may wish to try a different conferencing approach can explore new possibilities. Comprehensive materials regarding teacher parent conferences exist in your local educational book store or on the Internet. It is very exciting when educators discover innovative and effective ways of doing things. Think about what this will mean for you as a teacher, for your students, and for their parents and guardians.

Chapter 13

The Law: Rights for Teachers and Students

How can I be an advocate for student rights and protect my own rights as a classroom teacher?



Being a Knowledgeable Professional

We live in increasingly complex times, where litigation is often viewed as the rule rather than the exception. Thus, you should have a basic awareness of the law as it relates to your profession and the rights of your students.

Here are a few cases in which the law impacts the lives of teachers and students.

- ***A young boy comes to school with green hair. The teacher sends him home.***
- ***A teacher criticizes the district school board and is threatened with termination of employment.***
- ***A fourth-grade teacher has the boys compete against the girls in academic games. A parent tells the teacher she is not permitted to organize her class in this way.***
- ***A student is injured in front of the school while waiting for the school bus. The parents retain an attorney and file a suit for negligence.***
- ***A group of sixth-grade students comes to school wearing orange arm bands protesting the use of pesticides at a local farm. The students are ordered to remove the bands or face suspension.***
- ***A parent enters the classroom during class and berates the teacher in front of the student.***
- ***A second-grade teacher senses that one of her students may be experiencing some type of abuse at home. She informs the principal, but the principal says that he will handle it. The teacher wonders if this is the correct action.***

The First, Tenth, and Fourteenth amendments of the Constitution give citizens basic protections under the law. The First Amendment protects freedom of speech, press, assembly, and grievance against the government. The Tenth

Amendment gives the powers not delegated by the Constitution to the federal government to the individual states or to the people, respectively. And finally, the Fourteenth Amendment protects due process and provides equal protection under the law. These three amendments are closely related to legal aspects of education.

It is important that you realize that legal decisions are often based on precedent cases or on interpretation of the Constitution. If you should encounter issues that require counsel or discussion, seek reliable resources in your state. Education associations or your district legal counsel should be able to answer your concerns and advise you on appropriate action.

Negligence

Most legal action taken against teachers and schools is in the area of negligence. Unavoidable accidents are not negligence.

Generally, negligence is applied to what is seen as inadequate supervision, lack of due care, or the making of inappropriate decisions that usually result in an injury to students. You can most often avoid such incidents by using common sense and fulfilling supervision responsibilities. Thus, in the yard, on the bus, on field trips, at lunch, before school, and in the classroom are all instances where a standard of supervision is required. If the teacher is preoccupied so that this standard cannot be fulfilled and the children are placed in jeopardy, this may result in an official case of teacher negligence.

Freedom of expression

Students have the right to wear unique and expressive clothing as long as it does not cause an apparent disruption of the educational program. The exceptions are articles of clothing that are gang-related or those that can, by their very nature, cause a disruption of the education process or bring into question the safety of that student or other students. While a bathing suit may be appropriate attire for the beach or around the pool, the context of school permits its prohibition. The coloring of hair or wearing of earrings and makeup is permitted as long as they do not cause a disturbance to the educational process.

Prayer and bible reading

All members of the educational community have the right to pray while at school, but the school and teacher, as agents of the state, may not designate regular school time for this purpose. Individually, and at any time, a student may choose to engage in this practice of religious freedom. Prayer as a moment of silence designated by the teacher is not permitted. Generally, prayer meetings that meet on the school site during lunch, before school, or after school are allowed.

Bible reading is only permissible in the public school setting when it is used for the purpose of demonstrating a style of writing or to

demonstrate a form of literature. Of course, students are permitted to carry bibles or other religious artifacts as a function of their religious preferences and freedom.

Due process

Students have the right of due process when accused of a violation that may result in suspension or expulsion. This right may be manifested in a hearing or the opportunity for counsel. Procedures differ from state to state.

Flag salute

The flag salute cannot be required of students since it may be an infringement upon their religious freedom. This does not mean that the flag salute or other patriotic exercise may not be conducted, only that you cannot require a student to stand and/or recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

Zero tolerance

Most courts have upheld the right of schools to have zero tolerance policies for drugs, alcohol, and weapons on school grounds. The result of such infractions following a hearing is suspension and/or expulsion.

Freedom from interference

Teachers are generally protected from parental or outside interference while teaching. It is a crime for a parent or guardian to disrupt a class.

Teachers' strike

Although it is not legal for teachers to strike, it is their right to express ideas contrary to those of the board of education, and to organize under the terms of collective bargaining.

Child abuse

As mandated reporters, teachers, and most school employees are required to report to the state's child protective service agency any cases of suspected child abuse. Usually, states have very specific guidelines that teachers should follow.

Educational malpractice

If a student's failure to learn is not a case of negligence or incompetence, teachers shall not be liable for malpractice.

✦ *Although it is not legal for teachers to strike, it is their right to express ideas contrary to those of the board of education, and to organize under the terms of collective bargaining.*

Records

Parents or guardians have the right to see and copy official school records related to their children. No secret files or records may be kept on or off campus.

Automobile liability

Teachers who take students in their personal automobiles are personally liable for any injury or damages sustained by the students, just as they would for any other passengers.

Contract

A teacher who signs or verbally accepts a contract for employment, which is then ratified by the board of trustees, is bound to that contract. If the employee willfully breaks the contract and accepts employment elsewhere without the consent of the district, the district

may contact the state for action toward credential revocation.

Right to a position

Unless specified in the teachers' contract, most teachers are hired for a position that they are credentialed to teach within the district, not in a specific grade level, school, or classroom.

Corporal punishment

States have differing laws and regulations related to corporal punishment within the school setting.

Free speech at school

Free speech may be curbed and students may be disciplined if they exhibit lewd and indecent speech during a school assembly or activity.

School law is a fascinating area of our educational environment. Note with interest new school-related laws and consult your local legal counsel for specific application.

The Union

What does the teachers' union do for teachers?

The union represents all of the teachers collectively in contract negotiations that determine salary, benefits, and working conditions. The union will negotiate such issues as salary increases, vision care benefits for spouses and family members, and policies related to teacher transfers and grade-level changes. The content of negotiations is different in every district. You should inquire as to the basic background, legal protection, and operational guidelines in your particular state. The union engages in political action, lobbying for pro-education legislation and supporting local, regional, and national political candidates.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of belonging to the union?

The advantages are summarized in the preceding paragraph, but some definite advantages of union membership are having strength through numbers, professional representation, and support. The union supports your legal rights as a teacher under your contract, as well as under the U. S. Constitution. Unions also provide liability insurance for you, free legal counsel and representation, and discount rates on a variety of commercial opportunities, including recreation, theme parks, auto purchases, and insurance.

The disadvantages of union membership are, of course, the monthly dues, the perceived loss of individual autonomy, and the occasional feeling that you are a small cog caught between the managerial giants of the union and the school administration.

Are teachers required to go along with a union strike?

This is one of those touchy issues. Technically, teacher strikes are illegal due to the potential impact upon the health and welfare of the community. (This is similar to restrictions on striking by other essential public workers, such as firefighters, police, and hospital workers.) This has to be a personal choice.

What do your colleagues think about the union?

Most teachers are members of the union, whether they are active or not. Many feel

unions have done a great deal for the teaching profession and are a necessary organization for continued progress, both educationally and economically.

What should I do my first year?

Talk to friends, family, and colleagues, but most likely you will choose to be inducted into the teachers union as a means of supporting your colleagues and your future.

Teacher Evaluation

A new teacher under contract will be observed and evaluated as a normal part of the retention process. The following describe the typical procedures, rights, and responsibilities afforded the beginning teacher related to the evaluation process.

Observational evaluations

Nearly all beginning teachers become a bit queasy when they realize that sooner or later, their principal will be observing and evaluating their performance. This is a natural reaction, but one that is often unfounded.

The goals (and often the mandate) for the new teacher evaluation process is for the school administrator to verify through observation and conference that the teachers are performing the teaching requirements in a satisfactory manner. Teachers who fulfill the requirements are retained; those who do not are not asked back. A secondary, and perhaps more important, rationale for this process is to provide vital feedback to the teacher for professional growth and development. In either event, the process may be similar to the following:

Pre-observation conference

The principal or administrator in charge of evaluation will notify you that the evaluation process is in progress and a pre-observation conference is required. The conference will most likely be a discussion of your professional goals and teaching objectives and will provide guidance for the instructional observation that will follow. During this initial meeting, you may be asked in which areas you want to grow. (One area you might cite, for example, is using new technologies in the curriculum.) Have some of the areas in which you would like to grow ready for discussion along with a list of resources that would help you to accomplish these goals. However, most administrators are primarily concerned about the specific goals you have for your class. You are the best judge of these needs, so you should come prepared for this discussion.

Some school administrators will request that you bring your planning book or samples of fully designed lessons, both short- and long-term. During this conference, the upcoming instructional observation should also be a topic for discussion. The principal should explain what he or she will be looking for, the duration of the observation, and when the post-conference will occur. You should have a clear picture of the entire evaluation process.

Instructional observation

While some administrators visit throughout the year, others reserve this practice for the official, required evaluation period once or twice a year. The formal evaluation often creates a bit more anxiety on the part of the beginning teacher, but the outcome should be the same. The principal will notify you of the time and duration of the observation. You will have ample time to

prepare and practice the lesson. It is advisable that you design and implement a lesson with which you feel comfortable and one that will motivate the students. The following guide might help you select a lesson for this purpose.

- ***Design a lesson that uses skills you have tested prior to the lesson.***
- ***Give an academic skill lesson to demonstrate your knowledge of the essential skill areas.***
- ***Make the instructional objective of your lesson plan clear to the observer.***
- ***Time the lesson to fit comfortably into the instructional time period (also the observation period).***
- ***Structure the lesson plan (written and delivered) so it fits into a standard seven- or five-step format.***
- ***Make your instructions/directions clear and adequately check for understanding.***
- ***Be sure your instruction appeals to the auditory, visual, and kinesthetic learning modalities of your students.***
- ***Sustain student interest and involvement during the lesson.***
- ***Connect your lesson to other disciplines and provide examples to support this approach.***
- ***Be sure your classroom management/ discipline plan is prominently posted. Do not hesitate to utilize this plan if circumstances should require it.***
- ***Use questioning skills throughout the lesson.***
- ***Show enjoyment in the lesson.***
- ***Keep the lesson consistent with the grade-level curriculum; know where the lesson fits into the state framework standards and district curriculum.***
- ***Provide a pleasant and appropriate physical environment; bulletin boards should reflect student work and positive concepts.***

Post-conference

The post-conference will generally occur within a week after the observation. Your supervisor will probably review the observation and may make suggestions for instructional improvement and opportunities for professional growth. He or she may discuss your plans for future endeavors. You may also be asked to provide your candid assessment of your teaching. If this should occur, be honest. You will be provided written documentation of the final evaluation, which you should file in a secure place. It is important to note that in some districts, school site administrators come and go. One leader's supervision style may not apply to that of the next. However, good planning and teaching will transcend these changes.

Tenure

Tenure is another term for job security or permanent employment. Tenure is generally achieved after two to three successful teaching years in the same district. Tenure is not usually transferable from district to district. Once a teacher is tenured, a move for dismissal must proceed through due process. Generally, in such instances, it must be clearly demonstrated that adequate steps to remediate have been implemented. From the perspective of a beginning teacher and one that is dedicated to positive change, you would only want qualified, committed, competent colleagues receiving tenure. These are the teachers who will be sending students to you, receiving them from you, and teaching next door.

Chapter 14

New Technologies: It's Not a Choice

How can I integrate technology into the curriculum?

Technology Integrated Throughout the Curriculum

New technologies are a reality of teaching and learning in today's schools. Just because many of our schools have yet to embrace technological innovations does not mean that technology is an optional learning tool. If your school district is not assuming a leadership role in this endeavor, organize your colleagues to create a technology initiative that begins now. Every teacher must be accountable for introducing the students to this indispensable learning medium. Just as it is not a choice for teachers (or administrators) to teach reading or math, it cannot be a teacher or principal choice to deny students the right to technological advances.

Without question, the Internet and other technologies are a national initiative. Probably nothing more potent has ever been introduced to the classroom. The swiftness of its development coupled with the attention by government and business around the world give added urgency for curriculum development and implementation of this new resource. Technology is evolving at a phenomenal rate as it becomes a powerful resource to bridge time, distance, and human interaction.

When teachers plan a thematic unit of study, they design lessons using conventional delivery systems as well as those that use new technologies. One does not take the place of the other: Instead, the two offer complementary learning experiences. As you read the model of a thematic unit shown on the next page, note the varied delivery systems that enrich the instruction.

Thematic Unit Model

Theme: Archaeology

This unit will be a general introduction to the science of archeaology.

Suggested Thematic Lessons

Writing

Journal writing—Record entries of a field archaeologist.

Word collage—Record words related to the life and work of the archaeologist.

Creative writing—Write original stories related to a major historical archaeological discovery.

> ***Technology application***—E-mail an archaeologist through a major university research center.

Literature

Reading—Read several stories or excerpts involving fictional archaeologists (versus the factual account of the authentic field archaeologist).

> ***Technology application***—Access several Internet sites related to major archaeological digs, and learn about the history of the sites, the findings, and the men and women who discovered them.

Social Studies

Students will explore the diversity of archaeological exploration—from the Incas to the Los Angeles subway construction; from the ash-covered city of Pompeii to early habitation in Antarctica.

> ***Technology application***—Access Internet sites related to each of these physical locales.

Physical Education

Trek, dig, sandbag, and learn about the physical demands put upon archaeologists.

> ***Technology application***—E-mail and/or video conference with an archaeologist posing specific questions related to these physical demands.

Mathematics

Using mathematics (geometry, algebra)—Calculate distance, size, shape, mass, and construction techniques.

> ***Technology application***—View sites with specific math applications such as the Egyptian pyramids, and the Mayan pyramids in the Americas.

Art

Students will learn about art that reveals critical information related to a culture, period, and civilization. They will study the techniques, materials and artists of the period.

> ***Technology application***—Access cave paintings in France and Spain; access museum collections from around the world using the Internet; use drawing, painting, and various computer programs to create personal and cultural art; have on-line chats and conferences with artists.

Music

Students will realize that music is an integral part of culture; archaeologists have found evidence of musical instruments.

> ***Technology application***—View instruments on the Internet or other static delivery systems; seek music sites related to specific cultures and download music for listening experience.

Culminating activity

Organize an "Archaeology Day"; demonstrate the use of equipment, create a sample classroom dig, record data, draw conclusions, reconstruct a culture, label artifacts, simulate a field camp, visit the university laboratory, establish an archaeological museum.

Technology and the View of the World Through Different Glasses

If you do not have a computer in your classroom, now is the time to get one. Computers are priced from several hundred to several thousand dollars. You can choose between used, refurbished, and new. You need a computer that will allow you to send E-mail, gain access to the Internet, word process, and keep files. If you have computer phobia, just ask for help. Anyone can operate the user-friendly computers of today. Check with the central district office to see if any mentors are available to provide technical and curriculum support. Contact these individuals before school starts so you can be placed on the top of the list. These people will be very busy in the first few weeks of school, reconnecting, repairing, and offering technical support. Ask your principal if you can attend one of the many seminars or workshops that will assist you in learning the basics. Attend a regional, state, or national computer-using educators' conference to see the scope of these innovations. Once you access E-mail and the Internet, you and your classroom will never be the same. Get started and take your students on a journey they deserve. Be sure to send an Internet Use Permission Form (see the next page) to parents and guardians and have them return the signed forms.

✦ *Using technology is like taking an infinite journey beyond the physical walls of the classroom.*

Internet Use Permission Form

Dear Parent or Guardian:

Throughout this academic year, our class will be using computers, the Internet, and other educational technologies to enhance our instructional program.

Every safeguard will be implemented to ensure that only appropriate educational resources will be available for use. Teacher supervision will always be present during instruction. Specific rules, access of appropriate materials, and expectations have been discussed with each student. All students have been present for this discussion and have agreed to follow all rules and regulations.

As a general policy, we require written parent permission to allow students to have access to the World Wide Web/Internet. If you grant permission for your child to have supervised access to the Internet (for instructional purpose only), please sign and date this form below. If you would like additional information, or would like a demonstration, check the appropriate space below.

In either case, please return this form by the end of the week. Thank you for being a partner in our educational mission.

Sincerely,

Ms./Mrs./Mr. _____

I hereby, give permission for my child, _____, to have supervised access to the Internet and other classroom instructional technologies.

_____ _____

Signature of Parent or Guardian Date

_____

Printed Name

❑ I would like a demonstration of the World Wide Web/Internet.

Chapter 15

Field Trips That Have Meaning

Can field trips be more than an outing to a museum?

Maximize Time and Energy

For teachers and students, the field trip is a wonderful activity offering firsthand study enrichment, and is a great capstone event. Field trips are authentic learning at its best. Here are the essential concepts of planning for the field trip, followed by a specific planning guide for field trip implementation.

Relate the field trip closely to the curriculum.

A field trip is an extended lesson that provides a rich addition to the topic of study.

Learning with firsthand experience is the primary objective.

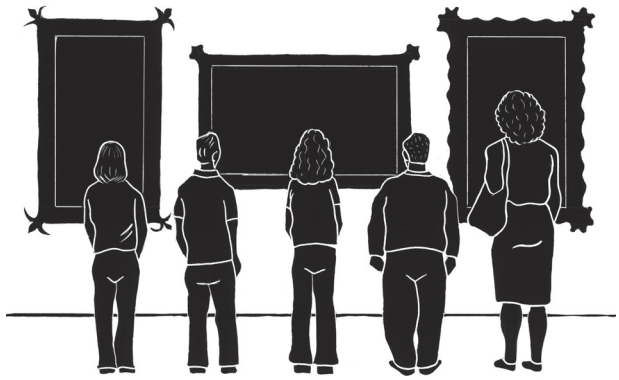
Plan the field trip because the event presents the most effective resource available for study.

Learning activities should lead up to the field trip event.

Present a number of subject lessons around the selected theme before taking the students on the trip. Follow-up lessons will build upon what the students experienced on the field trip and in previous lessons. No field trip should stand alone or be unrelated to the previous learning.

Participatory tasks should engage the children during the trip.

Students should actively engage in viewing, searching, reacting, reflecting, and responding to the events that occur. Students should have study questions on hand, and take part in small-group work and large-group discussion, as well as writing and drawing activities.



Related instructional tasks should occur following the field trip.

It is critical that the field trip not be the final lesson of the thematic unit. It can be a capstone or culminating activity, but the effective teacher will use the force of this interactive event to build on the unit.

Careful planning is essential for the success of the field trip and the safety of the children.

Send a letter home several weeks prior to the field trip explaining both the logistics and instructional objectives (See the next page). Another letter should be sent home just preceding the trip offering specifics such as duration, transportation, what to bring, what to wear, what not to bring, and behavior expectations. This is important not only so that the students come prepared, but also to alleviate anxiety on the part of the parent or guardian. If a parent or guardian does not want his or her child to participate, you must respect the position and make arrangements for a class at the school where the students will spend the day.

Although the district should have a contract with a reliable transportation company, be sure that the arrangements are secure. Check back one or two days prior to the field trip to confirm the time, destination, and size of the bus. Even though the bus driver may feel (and assert) that he or she is the "captain," you are still the person in charge. ***If at any time you suspect that something is wrong, that safety is a factor, or that your students are in jeopardy, you must take charge.*** Always carry a cellular phone on field trips; if you need assistance

in any way, you will have the necessary communication device to accomplish it.

You may choose to ask parents or guardians, paraprofessionals, or university students, to accompany your class on the field trip. Do not take parents just because they ask. You must make the choice based on the individual's interest, maturity, ability to supervise, and decision-making capabilities. Some parents will ask to go on the field trip because they want to visit the selected site. They will be assuming an important role, and the well-being of your children may depend on your choices. Ask what the appropriate ratio of adults to children is in your district. Increase the number of supervisors if the event requires greater supervision, if special-needs students are present, or if you are using public transportation.

If possible, meet with all of the assistants several days prior to the field trip. If your assistants do not attend the meeting or do not respond to your calls, think twice about permitting them to participate in the field trip. At this meeting, review the role of the assistants. Discuss good

Sample Field Trip Letter

Dear Parent or Guardian:

On October 14th, our sixth-grade class will be embarking on a field trip to the Northwest University archaeology site located about 20 miles from our school. During this excursion, students will meet archaeologists, view authentic "digs," or sites, have the opportunity to participate in a dig, learn about data-recording methods, and discuss this exciting study with professional and university archaeologists. This study-work excursion will complement our continuing classroom study of Ancient Peoples.

Students should dress casually and wear comfortable shoes. Hats are recommended. A light jacket or sweater should be brought along in case the weather turns cool or windy. All students will be expected to conduct themselves appropriately for this type of academic field outing.

Students should bring a sack lunch and a box drink. No plastic or glass containers will be permitted. Students who normally receive a lunch from school will pick up sack lunches from the cafeteria just prior to departure. The students will be having lunch with the field archaeologists, making possible informal discussions and learning.

Students will be closely supervised at all times by the teachers and selected field trip volunteers. Transportation will be provided by the school's bus company. Departure time will be at 8:05 a.m. and return to the school will be at approximately 3:30 p.m. You will need to pick up your child from the classroom between 3:30 and 4:00 p.m.

Please do not permit your child to bring any items that would not be appropriate for regular school (pocket knives, gum, candy, radios, CD players, games, and so forth). Money should be left at home.

Please sign the attached permission form and return it to me by October 12th. If permission forms are not submitted by that date, your son/daughter will not be permitted to attend the field trip.

If you should have any questions or concerns, please feel free to phone me at the school at (888) 888-9999 or E-mail me at teacher@school.com.

Sincerely,

Ms./Mrs./Mr. _____

supervision, expectations for student behavior, responsibility, and your expectation for the role of the assistants. Provide an opportunity for asking and answering questions. In addition, be sure it is clear that assistants do not bring guests, younger children, siblings, or other family members. Provide all assistants with instructions and other relevant materials in writing. ***Remember, only take those assistants you can count on.***

Logistics are very important when you are with groups of children. Be sure your field trip site has adequate bathroom facilities, access for special-needs students, facilities in the event of inclement weather, lunch areas, and so forth. All of these issues are very important if you want to have a trouble-free field trip. Preview your field trip alone or with friends and/or colleagues prior to your first time with the students. You'll have great fun and will know what to expect.

The cell phone is an indispensable lifeline for those venturing from the school. If a child, assistant, or bystander is injured or in need of medical attention, you have the 911 call button in your possession. You can contact a parent or guardian directly if such an emergency should arise. If you need additional support, you can call for it. And finally, in the event that one of your students becomes separated or lost, you can be contacted on the spot with your cell phone.

Distribute your business cards to each of your students at the onset of the field trip. If you don't have one, get one printed. Explain to the children that if they are separated or in trouble and cannot find the class, they should ask someone to call the number on the card. Include your cell phone number as well as that of the school. Be sure to leave your cell phone number with the secretary in the school office. At the conclusion of the trip, be sure to collect the cards.

It is very important that you have at least two class lists of students who are attending the field trip. Keep one and give one to a trusted assistant. Begin by checking off the students as they arrive at school for the field trip. Check them off again as they board the bus. You will check them off several times during the day, culminating when students enter the bus for the trip back to school. It's not a bad idea to check a final time when students leave the bus upon arrival. In addition to the class lists, be sure you have copies of emergency information for each child. Hopefully, you will never need this, but in that very remote chance, it is critical you reach the parent or guardian as quickly as possible.

You do not want to use student name tags that may identify the child to unauthorized onlookers or those who have no business related to your class. Thus, it is a good idea to have students wear the school logo shirt or a name tag with the school name on one side and the district and school phone number on the other. This will assist you and the student if he or she should become separated, but not reveal personal information about the student.

Preplanning is essential if your trip will run past the lunch hour. Since so many students are on subsidized lunch programs, you will need to make arrangements with lunch services at your school or district to have bag or box lunches provided instead of the regular "hot" lunches. Be sure to send home instructions for those bringing lunches. They should bring

items wrapped in disposable wrappers (not hard plastic containers), drinks in boxes, and no cans or bottles. The day before the trip, be sure to review the rules for food and drink on the bus or at the site. In your preplanning, establish where the lunch area is located so the bus can meet you there and bring the lunches. Think about bringing along some extra granola bars or peanut butter sandwiches for those who forgot lunches. Be sure to give adequate time for cleanup following lunch.

You are responsible for bringing a well-stocked first-aid kit on the field trip. Recommendations are that you bring the standard kit that is probably in a small backpack already hanging in the classroom. Be sure to check out the contents beforehand. Along with the normal provisions, bring a box of tissues for runny noses and perhaps a bag of hard candy as a treat for the ride home.

Most field trip destinations have wonderful gift shops that will tempt almost all of your youngsters. Don't do it! Inevitably, this will cause more problems than it is worth. Some children will bring $20 while others will bring $2 (regardless of what was recommended to parents). Children will lose their money before the bus gets out of the school parking lot. This activity has the potential for a real-life disaster. It's your call, but this is one to think about.

Be sure you and your students know the behavioral expectations. ***Review the rules several times a day before the planned trip.*** Let the students know you are serious. If anyone cannot follow directions, notify them and the parents or guardians that his or her participation is in jeopardy. Give the children every opportunity to be successful. Check for understanding, remind students, and guide them before and during the field trip.

Have everyone be sure to get a drink of water and use the bathrooms before getting on the bus. The wisdom of this advice pretty much stands on its own.

The field excursion is about learning and pacing. You will continuously be focusing the students on the power of this educational experience while at the same time pacing the activities so you accomplish all that you set out to do. You will speed up the pace, provide time for rest, and allow periods for fun and togetherness. Although you will be busy, have fun with the students; never forget to smile and laugh with them throughout the day.

As well as you plan, you can never anticipate everything that could conceivably happen. The bus might get a flat tire, a student might experience a stomach ache, or the commuter train might be an hour late. Bring extra paper

and crayons, sing songs, and play games to keep the students busy and feeling self-assured. Always be prepared, and, if necessary, be ready to turn the lemons into lemonade. These events will be remembered for a lifetime.

A Field Trip Reflection

Some years ago, a second-grade class studied the harbor. Students viewed films, wrote stories about boats, and learned about ballast, booms, and waterlines. Students designed and built small wood replicas of freighters, tugboats, or ocean liners. They tested their creative talent in a school harbor, built by previous classes. It was an area approximately 20 feet by 20 feet, with winding channels, bridges, a breakwater, docks, piers, and buoys. The cement and epoxy bottom was painted a dark blue, and it was filled ceremoniously with water prior to the "maiden voyages."

The student's boats floated! They were proud! They couldn't wait to see real ships in a real harbor.

It was 8 a.m. when the bus pulled into the driveway at school. Parent permission slips had been signed and submitted. Lunches were securely tucked away in a large cardboard box and placed in the storage compartment of the bus. The teacher loaded another box under the front seat, where she was to have possession of the contents from beginning to end. It was all so exciting, as the bus slowly roared away from all the normal activities of school. The students wouldn't be returning until nearly 3:00 p.m. It was a long way to the harbor.

To this day, many of those students can see the vivid colors, feel the water, smell the oily scents, and hear the loud blasts from the freighters' tall stacks.

Field Trip Planning Guidelines

Field trip (name of site to be visited) _____

Theme or subject (related to the curriculum) _____

Grade level _____

Learning Objectives (specific learning outcomes that should occur)

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Name of site, address, location, phone, contact person _____

_____

Days and hours of operation _____

Cost (for students and for parents/adults) _____ Guides available _____

Lead time for reservations _____ Length of visit (time at site) _____

Time required for transportation _____

Transportation provided by _____

_____

Total time of trip _____

Areas to be visited _____

_____

Facilities for lunch _____ Restrooms _____ Special-needs access _____

Gift shop (yes, no) _____

Other _____

Parent permission letter written explaining the nature of the field trip and its importance to current classroom curriculum study (include information about the place, hours, transportation, and supervision):

❑ Completed ❑ Still needs to be completed

Field Trip Planning Guidelines (continued)

Supervision and grouping _____

Parent training _____

One large group or subgroups with parents/adults as guides _____

Class lists/class counts _____

Emergency cards _____

Cell phone # _____

Camera _____

First-aid kit _____

Snacks _____

School name tags, T-shirts, lists, business cards _____

Lessons preceding the field trip

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Questions or guiding issues to be addressed by students while at the site

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Will they write, record, draw, discuss, and so forth? _____

Follow-up activities: (Follow-up lessons in the classroom that maximize the experience and consolidate what has been learned and demonstrate whether or not the objectives have been met)

_____

_____

Teacher notes _____

_____

Chapter 16

Expecting the Unexpected

How will I know what to do when I don't even know what will happen?

On the Topic of Diversity . . .

In many parts of the country, teaching in a multicultural classroom has taken on a new meaning. You must be informed, sensitive, knowledgeable, and aware to be effective working with children of diverse backgrounds. You should come to understand that some words, gestures, glances, and approaches are alien to some cultures and tend to impede communication between teacher and students. An awareness of these behaviors heightens the comfort zone for teacher and learner.

You will need to make modifications in what they do and how they do it. You need to examine your lessons, short- and long-term, so that you lower barriers to learning and provide more opportunities for success. You must seek ways to challenge high achievers just as you do those with learning difficulties. Your understanding and translation of cultural strengths will provide a far more meaningful curriculum.

Most educators agree that they cannot teach to each culture, but must teach to students of diversity. Effective teaching with understanding and knowledge transcends the racial and cultural issues that otherwise may limit the classroom experience.

New Students Mid-year: What Do I Do?

Everything is under control, the children are all settled in, your routines are established, everyone seems happy, and you have begun some exciting lessons and units. It couldn't be going better.

Then, at 10:30 a.m. on a Tuesday morning, the door swings open. The assistant principal is standing in the doorway with a young boy. The class turns to see what this special event could be. You walk over to the newcomer, and the assistant principal introduces this bewildered

young man. You look him in the eyes and welcome him to class. You turn and say to the class, "Boys and girls, this is Alex, our new student in fourth grade." The hurried assistant principal whispers in your ear that Alex does not speak a word of English. "Oh," you whisper back. "Not a problem." You're thinking, "What am I going to do now?"

And so it goes in classroom after classroom across America. You don't have time to consult anyone. It's "showtime" for Alex and the class.

Whenever you are assigned a student mid-year, some (or all) of the following strategies will assist you in this adjustment. Use what works, discard what doesn't.

Mid-year student checklist:

- ***Introduce the new student to the class.***
- ***Don't ask him or her to speak in front of the class since that would embarrass the student.***
- ***Find the student a desk, a chair, and a place to call home.***
- ***Make a desk name card immediately.***

- ***Assign a buddy to assist the new student, preferably one who will be sitting nearby.***
- ***If the student is just learning English, seat him near another student who speaks the new student's language and can be helpful.***
- ***As soon as possible, have the buddy take the student on a tour of the school, especially the restrooms, drinking fountains, cafeteria, library, and nurse's office.***
- ***Seek teaching-resource strategies for students acquiring English.***
- ***Quickly secure all of the materials that the other children possess (crayons, pencils, paper, books, and so forth).***
- ***Do not require the student to complete all of the assigned work.***
- ***Spend some extra time looking in on the student when you are monitoring the group.***
- ***Try to secure the student's records from the last school to ascertain the ability level of the student.***
- ***Seek school resources, if appropriate (English Language Development, English as a second language, special education, and so forth).***
- ***Respect the student's culture and background.***
- ***Check to be sure the student is making friends and is participating in recess and lunch activities.***
- ***Be sensitive to what it must be like to be in a strange place with a new language and have no friends or support.***
- ***Make no assumptions about the student's previous knowledge or experience.***

Before the close of the school day, be sure to tell the student how nice it is having him or her in the class and how you look forward to seeing him or her tomorrow.

You'll soon wonder when the classroom door will open again, and who will be standing there waiting to enter your special community.

A Few Tips: Sick Children, Extra Clothes, Body Odor, Sleepiness, and Annoying Habits

What sets the veteran teacher apart from the beginning teacher is the veteran's ability to meet the unexpected with humor, compassion, preparation, and flexibility. Be prepared to meet these crises head on, and enjoy the first year's growth of both you and your students.

Some common classroom experiences

Vomit: For certain, one of your students will do this. In the first few days of school, when you are reviewing procedures, talk to the class about vomiting. Explain to the students that if they feel sick and think they are going to vomit, they should tell their desk neighbor and quickly head for the bathroom. (If they tell you first, you'll need a trip to the dry cleaners.)

The custodian may have an absorbent to minimize the deed if it should occur in your classroom. Be sure to call the custodian, so he or she can clean up the mess as soon as possible. If you see other students beginning to look a little pale, you may want to take the entire class outside for a breath of fresh air.

Body odor: Body odor most often affects upper-grade students. The easiest way to deal with this problem is to confront it. Simply take the young person aside after school and inform him kindly but gently that the change in life as one grows up requires at least one shower per day with soap. Also explain the value of a good antiperspirant, to be used after showering under clothing. Extend your explanation to wearing a clean shirt or blouse daily. That's usually all that is required.

Bad breath: The same reminder about showers can be transferred to good dental hygiene. Obtain some extra toothbrushes from your local dentist and some toothpaste samples to hand out to those who are especially in need. Send these students off midday (again, sensitively and in private) to brush well. For those students who eat foods that abound with garlic and other strong herbs, a private discussion on social realities may bring a new awareness to the new student. A few breath mints in the top drawer of your desk may also be of help.

> ✦ *The unexpected in the classroom is about feelings, security, confidence, and safety for the children and the teacher.*

Forgotten lunches: A jar of peanut butter and a box of crackers will sustain both those who forgot their lunches and those whose parents didn't understand that the subsidized lunch program does not begin until all forms are completed, submitted, and approved. Be sure you are using the peanut butter with preservatives so that it will not spoil in your file drawer. Be sure that students do not have peanut allergies.

Can I bring my lizard to class?

It was Monday afternoon when a second-grade student asked the teacher if she could bring her lizard to class to share.

Assuming it to be a small lizard, the teacher gave the student the go-ahead to bring it in on Friday. When Friday morning came, the young girl entered with her three-foot iguana in tow. The teacher tried to remain calm, remembering there were 30 children in the classroom, and wondering if iguanas eat little children—or teachers!

It was too late to contact the mother who had dropped off the child and pet. She was already off to parts unknown, so the iguana would have to spend the rest of the day with its leash chained to a desk. Thump, thump, drag, drag, as the iguana and the 50-pound desk moved back and forth all day long. As you would assume, calm was never restored that day.

You need to consult with the parent when the animal for sharing presents unusual problems. Such displays might require parent supervision, so the parent can remove the animal after the presentation.

Lessons learned about sharing and animals:

- ***Be sure to send home instructions for bringing animals at the beginning of the year.***
- ***Review with the class appropriate behavior related to visiting animals (tolerate no less).***
- ***Parents must bring the animal to class and wait through sharing.***
- ***Parents should plan on taking the animal back home after sharing.***
- ***Papers verifying up-to-date vaccinations must be presented in advance.***
- ***Never allow a child to bring any animal more vicious than a Golden Retriever. (Get it?)***

- ***Have procedures where one person at a time can approach the animal (if appropriate).***
- ***Remember that the animal may be frightened and react differently than it would at home.***
- ***Remember that sharing, even of animals, is good both for the self-esteem of the student sharing and for the class, which gains new information or has new experiences.***
- ***You must be the judge of whether to permit a specific animal to be brought to the classroom and you must determine parameters and the extent of sharing. Animals are wonderful visitors to the classroom, but be sure everyone remembers his or her best manners.***

Questions about God

Just when you least expect it, you'll get a question about God. Is there a God? Do you believe in God? Is my grandma now with the Lord? Regardless of your religious beliefs, the student has just moved into that rather strained territory where you need to say something, but where you do not want to confuse the student or create conflicts with any family traditions. Here are a couple of alternative responses that usually satisfy the child.

"Do you believe in God?"

Usually when your student asks this the child is simply affirming his own belief in God, and you might direct the question right back to him. You might say, "A lot of people do, but some don't. Many of your classmates believe in different things. They have different religions. It is a personal thing. What do you and your family believe?" Following the response, you say, "That's really nice," and nine out of ten times that will be all that is required. Again, if students ask you about death, heaven, or God, you may want to refer them to their parents, since this question may best be answered in the home. Parents usually appreciate a phone call home to prepare them.

Questions about sex

Sex questions take several forms. Sometimes a student will want to know where babies come from, and the answer he or she is seeking is simple, "From the mommy." The student may not be requesting an explanation of sexual encounters or even basic biology. Don't tell students more than they want to hear. Again, questions asked outside of an approved sex education course should be referred to the parents. You may tell the student that this is a question to be asked of mom or dad. Generally, parents expect the teacher to refer the child to them.

Parents who may not be the parents

Think about the fact that 50 percent of your students will at sometime in their educational careers be living with only one parent, and some of those will not be living with a biological parent at all. When you send notes home and gifts for holidays (most notably Mother's and Father's Day), remember that. Your students' guardians may be grandparents, foster parents, aunts, uncles, or older siblings. You may be reporting to parents who share joint custody. This arrangement may be temporary or permanent. Simply raise your consciousness to meet the needs of the students and their guardians.

Newsworthy events in or out of the classroom

It seems as though all the world is a stage, and that the stage extends into our homes and classrooms. Newsworthy events, such as space disasters, urban riots, military conflicts, police chases, and high-profile trials are live topics of our educational community. Many of these events are of major concern to our students.

You might begin a discussion of a newsworthy event by setting the parameters for the discussion. Explain to the students that what we say and what our friends share is private, "for our ears and eyes only" (of course, they can discuss this with parents). Talk to the students about respecting each other's ideas, feelings, and emotions. Explain that this is not a forum to discuss blood, gore, and shocking events, but an opportunity to share feelings. No one is required to talk, only to listen. You may wish to bring the students to the front of the room on the carpet or have them remain at their seats, depending on the prevailing classroom mood. Ask an opening question such as, "Is anyone feeling something about (the event) that he or she would like to share?" If there are no replies, wait a minute and ask again. Don't push, don't call on a student, and if you do not receive responses, move on to something else.

Students will need time to get used to this open and trusting environment. Guide the future class activities by your perception of the feelings and emotions in the room. If students are feeling uneasy and disturbed, you might want to postpone the planned lesson and read a reassuring story. If you do engage the students in expression, offer your full attention and be supportive of any expressed feelings. Do not disagree, argue, or show disapproval. Simply thank the students for sharing and move on. If one student should tend to dominate the session, control the frequency and duration of these comments. When you feel it is time, disengage the topic and reassure students that they will have the opportunity to revisit this issue.

You have to be the judge of which media events warrant review and reflection. Be sensitive to these occurrences, and allow students to talk, write, and express themselves within a guided learning environment. Again, most elementary school children will not benefit from viewing the unfolding of grisly events on the breaking news story, but will respond to your understanding and explanation.

Expect the Unexpected

We live in difficult times when natural as well as man-made disasters often conflict with our daily classroom routines. We all hope that an earthquake, tornado, or drive-by shooting will not happen, but we know all too well that for more and more of us, the odds increase each teaching day. Since we cannot predict when such events will occur, it is imperative that a well-designed school disaster survival recovery plan be in place, and that your class be well rehearsed and able to follow your instructions implicitly.

The first thing you can do is study your school disaster plan. Know what you are supposed to do and where you are supposed to go in varying instances. When do you duck and cover and when do you move outside of the classroom for shelter? What is expected of you and your students? What special equipment and supplies should you have on hand in your classroom and what will the school furnish at a central location? How do you respond to a fire, flood, invasion, or earthquake? Each may require a very different response. Initially, you should go through this list and be sure to engage in these emergency drills as soon as possible.

Disaster Plan checklist:

- ***Obtain instructions as per school and district policy.***
- ***Walk through the procedures for each varied occurrence.***
- ***Check your first aid kit or other preparedness supplies.***
- ***Without alarming the children, explain the importance of the practice.***

- ***Tolerate no silliness or insubordination during these drills.***
- ***Be honest about the effectiveness of your rehearsal.***
- ***Take this very seriously—your actions could save lives.***
- ***Practice, practice, practice.***

A relatively new form of life-threatening school disruption is the armed invasion and drive-by shooting. These are most tragic in that these are not random acts of nature, but ones in which humans target other humans. Be prepared to act, and act without hesitation.

- ***Train students to follow your directions unquestioningly. Hesitation may have dire consequences.***
- ***If your school has an alarm for such occurrences, follow the mandated procedures.***
- ***Teachers closest to the building doors are usually assigned to lock the outer doors, preventing an intruder from gaining entry.***
- ***All internal doors or doors to freestanding buildings are usually locked.***
- ***Turn off lights.***
- ***Move students to the floor away from windows and outer walls.***
- ***Students should not be in view from the outside.***
- ***Wait until the all-clear signal is heard before moving.***

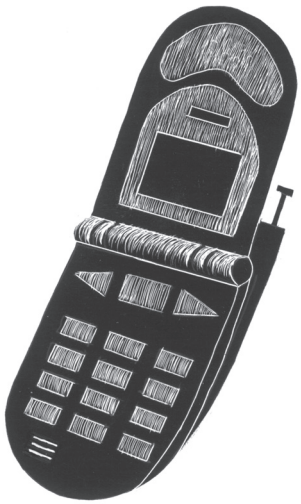
Regardless of the event, you should keep your students calm and reassured that they will be all right. Students will often worry about their parents, siblings, and pets. Reassure them that everyone will be fine and that they are not to worry.

Even if you are tempted to get additional information, do not turn on the television or radio, as this only raises the anxiety for the students and adds to the trauma. You can obtain additional information from the administration, but only share positive information with the students.

Following any traumatic episode, it is important that you allow your students to talk and write about it, and perhaps even draw what they are feeling. It has been proven that this "structured" expression is very important for students so they can work through an emotional event. Structure the discussion so that everyone is not talking at once and everyone has an opportunity to share if he or she wishes. Never make either talking or drawing a requirement.

This conversation may continue for a designated time each day for several days or longer, depending on the event and how it has affected the children. They may not be able to talk about their feelings at home, so this may be a critically important outlet.

At the same time, be sure that the discussion does not revolve around blood, death, and violence. Upper-grade students tend to express themselves this way, often for the shock value. Discourage such descriptions beyond what



seems necessary, and sensitively guide the discussion. If students are facing horrendous emotional distress, seek crisis counselors that are usually on call in your district or in consortium districts. These professionals may be able to assist your students beyond what you are able to do.

In an emergency where student supervision is required for extended periods of time (beyond the school day to several days), teachers are required to remain on duty until such time as they are released by their supervisor. This means that if you have children at day care, teenage children at home, or a spouse or significant other, notify them in advance of this possibility. Design a family emergency plan that arranges for all members of your family to be accounted for and cared for in your absence. It is customary for administrators to release teachers with young children first, while those faculty with fewer outside commitments will usually volunteer to assist at the school until the crisis has passed. Communication may be disrupted from a few minutes to several days, so be sure your family plan is in place. During several recent disasters, land phone lines were immediately disrupted and then jammed by overuse, while cellular service continued for a much longer period. Every teacher would benefit from having a cellular phone as insurance against the unexpected. It has proven invaluable on many occasions.

Be sure you continuously account for your students, taking roll often. Do not release a student to anyone (no matter what the circumstances) except to the parents or the persons designated on the Emergency Card. This is very important.

Finally, supplement this information and the data you obtain from your school with materials from various local, state, and national government agencies. Check radio and television Web sites for public-service disaster-preparedness information.

A few of helpful sites include:

http://earthquake.usgs.gov/learning/preparedness.php, provides preparedness and response information.

The "FEMA for kids" site *www.fema.gov/kids/* provides insight, games, and information to prepare children for the unforeseen disaster.

The *www.redcross.org* site offers information for children and adults and has lots of important information.

Disaster reminders

In the event of a real disaster or emergency, you won't have time to look at this reminder, so read it carefully now!

- ***Know where the first aid supplies are located.***
- ***Know the evacuation plan for fires, earthquakes, tornadoes, or other natural disasters.***
- ***Know the school plan for an invasion lockdown.***
- ***Have emergency cards for all students (update when new students arrive).***
- ***Have materials, songs, games, pencils, paper, and crayons readily available in case you need them to keep students occupied.***
- ***Have your personal cellular phone charged and ready.***
- ***Know the location of emergency food, water, and other provisions.***
- ***Have a repertoire of techniques to keep students calm.***
- ***Wait for directions as instructed in drills and practice.***
- ***Never release students to anyone other than those persons authorized on the Emergency Card.***
- ***If no instructions are forthcoming (for a sustained period of time), check with a teaching colleague before taking action.***
- ***Know what to do in the event of a fire (keep low to the floor, touch doors and walls to check for excessive heat before opening) or earthquake (have children get under strong tables/desks, cover head, face away from windows).***
- ***Never leave students alone without adequate adult supervision.***
- ***Never leave the school site unless released by the school administrator.***
- ***Know who is on the emergency leadership team and what the normal procedures will be in various emergencies.***
- ***Practice and review procedures until you are confident that you can take appropriate action in an emergency.***
- ***Practice drills and procedures with students to ensure emergency readiness.***

Hope it never happens. If it does, you will be ready.

The wind and the weather

When the wind blows, really howls and screeches, soars and thrashes, all that any teacher has known becomes so very, very tentative. Not a single course or lesson in the preparation for being a professional educator can prepare for the day the wind blows. The wind is sly and clever and never does it gust in the same direction, with the same intensity, for the same duration. All we can do is wait, watch, listen, and yes, enjoy.

Confined to a classroom with thirty students for seven or eight hours, you will gain an immediate understanding of the dilemma. Students are charged with electrical energy that requires them to wiggle in every direction simultaneously. Constant chatting and movement is the order of the day, combined with rattling windows, dogs barking, vibrating walls, grime and dust flowing with the cold air under the door space, electrical failures, no recess, and the constant worry of broken tree limbs.

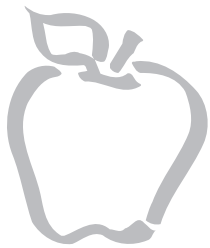
One solution is to set up a Weather Box. In the back of your room, have a box or boxes containing a variety of weather-related

materials, such as books to read, worksheets, science experiments, art supplies, music, and even a videotape or two. When it rains, students can construct rain gauges and chart and graph the day's rainfall. For that teacher intent on maintaining the curriculum, mathematics can be skillfully facilitated by having students measure the temperature every half-hour. Similar activities can be carried out for barometric pressure, wind speed, and direction. Visually, students can verify and document cloud formations, and attempt to predict weather patterns based upon the evidence they collect. A wonderful tool for use in cooperative learning groups, the Weather Box will provide memorable, exciting, and educationally sound learning experiences.

Chapter 17

Professional and Personal Development

How will I be able to remain professionally and personally vital during my early years of teaching?



Professional development is very much a part of the K–12 school scene. It takes a variety of forms, from the mandated to the voluntary, and opportunities are abundantly available. Both new and veteran teachers are required to maintain their pedagogical skills through staff development meetings, subject workshops, after-school in-service meetings, and professional conferences. In addition, many teachers identify areas of personal and professional interest and seek the financial resources to take part in a wide range of activities.

It is expected that new teachers will request professional growth opportunities. The most commonly organized kinds of professional growth opportunities can be classified into these categories: professional association conferences, one-day workshops, continuing education, on-line professional growth activities, university advanced-degree and supplemental credentials, and research or project presentations. Generally, the district will pay for a substitute teacher, conference registration fees, and sometimes a per diem payment for hotel and meals.

Some Development Opportunities

Professional association conferences

Most regional, state, and national subject-area associations sponsor professional conferences where experts present relevant workshops and lecture series to eager audiences. The most common of these conferences are in social studies, mathematics, reading, science, bilingual education, special education, and technology. New teachers will quickly feel comfortable in this environment, since many of the sessions are designed specifically for beginning teachers. Accom-panying the learning sessions,

educational vendors in the exhibition hall showcase the newest materials and equipment in the field.

One-day workshops

The one-day workshop session is generally quite local and has a specific focus. Watch for brochures on the bulletin board in the teachers' room for upcoming events.

Continuing education

Those who take courses through a university's continuing education department or extended program usually do so to fulfill mandated professional growth unit requirements. Universities offer a wide variety of programs, some for credit and some not. Check with your local university or college for current programs.

On-line professional growth activities

The newest professional development is being provided via the Internet and "distance learning." This may involve reading conventional books, reading on-line, communicating with colleagues and/or instructors via E-mail, and viewing videotapes. Assessment can be in the form of an on-line submission, an examination, or an on-campus assessment. These programs will hit explosive proportions as both public and private education institutions cut costs and maximize market share.

University advanced-degree and supplemental credentials

Some teachers choose to attend formal public or private university classes to obtain supplemental credentials or an advanced academic degree. Take some time and explore the possibilities that may coincide with your interests. The result of these experiences may permit mobility within the profession or simply enhance your knowledge base and skill level.

Research or project presentations

If you are interested in doing research and sharing your findings, there are research conferences specifically for this purpose. If you wish to share some successful classroom activity or project, you may apply to be a presenter at any of the subject area conferences described above. Usually, the lead time for application and selection is six months, so plan ahead. The host organization often provides registration and a small honorarium to cover materials. If you are accepted as a speaker, your school district might reimburse you for some or all of your expenses; your participation serves as positive district public relations to others in the profession. This is a wonderful way to share what you are doing.

You can use the Professional Growth Record Sheet on the page 104 to keep track of your professional development.

Achieving a Balance

One must strive to maintain a balance between work, learning, and one's personal life to be an effective teacher. The professional dimensions of the renewal process are those activities that have a direct and immediate impact on the job. The personal dimension of renewal is of critical importance for the health and welfare of the teacher. We do much for our students yet we often neglect to nourish ourselves. Therefore, both beginning and veteran teachers are well-advised to assess the personal renewal dimension of their lives and to set realistic objectives to meet these goals. This isn't the time to gather up the family for an outing to the beach or go to a movie because it would be fun for the family. It is a time for you to indulge yourself and do the things you want to do. Simply knowing that you are in control of yourself and your choices has a powerful positive impact.

Networking is especially useful in the self-renewal process because it helps to dispel the feelings of professional and intellectual isolation often experienced by new teachers. Formal faculty meetings, workshops, conferences,

supervision duty, and so forth, rarely fulfill this need.

Often, when teachers are asked about their recent attendance at a professional conference, it becomes clear that the important discussions occur in much less formal settings than the official conference meetings. Informal, spontaneous meetings at a local restaurant to share teaching stories can lead to the formation of a special network of friends and professional colleagues.

Renewal is a continual process, and the rewards are significant and long-lasting. It is a way to make your career richer and more enjoyable.

Professional Growth Record Sheet

The activities below represent growth hours for professional development requirements.

Name of Activity	Description	Date of Participation	Date of Completion	Hours Approved By

Chapter 18

Preparing for a Substitute: It's Inevitable

How is continuity maintained when a substitute is in my classroom?

At some time, you will be absent from your teaching. It may be a half-day, or possibly even a week. Your absence may be for illness, a family emergency, a conference, an in-service program, or a day off for rest. You may or may not know in advance that you will be absent. In either case, a substitute teacher will be called in by the district, in order to maintain the continuity in your educational program. How you prepare for the substitute will make a great difference in what occurs in your absence.

Ask your colleagues to give you the names of good substitutes during the first weeks of school. Ask how the substitute relates to the students and other teachers and how he or she implements your instructions. Then, when you notify the district or school of your absence (by phone or E-mail), request that substitute (or another substitute with whom you are familiar). By requesting a particular individual, you allow that person to learn about your program and become familiar with your students over a period of time.

Generic and Specific Plans

Prepare clear, complete lesson plans for your substitute. These will maintain continuity in your teaching, provide students with the material and experiences you want them to have, and minimize opportunities for problems. Two types of substitute plans are recommended. One is a generic plan for those days when it is impossible to provide any current lessons, and the second is a specific plan.

For those days when you will be absent without notice, be sure to have a generic plan in a folder in your desk drawer. Label the folder "SUBSTITUTE."

Contents of the substitute teacher folder—a generic plan:

- *Your name, grade level, and room number*
- *Names of instructional aides, volunteers, and when each can be expected to arrive*
- *The name of a teaching colleague (and his or her room number) who can be contacted for assistance*
- *Roster of faculty and staff with custodian and school secretary highlighted*
- *Class list*
- *Seating chart (updated)*
- *A list of those students who take the bus and specific procedures*
- *A list of students who have special needs; include possible suggestions to assist these students*
- *Names of a few students who are especially trustworthy and can assist the substitute teacher*
- *Class management plan with explanation*
- *Map of school grounds with key locations marked*
- *Daily schedule/minimum day schedule, assembly schedule*
- *Procedures for transitions such as meeting students on the yard at the beginning of the day, after lunch, at dismissal*
- *Restroom and drinking fountain procedures*
- *List of special duties (bus, lunch, recess, after school, and so forth)*
- *Lunch procedures (subsidized lunch)*
- *Disaster plans and drill instructions (with walking and assembly locations clearly marked)*
- *Inclement weather schedule and procedures including examples of activities familiar to the students*
- *Supply a Substitute Report Form in which the substitute teacher informs you of successes, comments, issues, and problems*

Note: Be sure you have discussed with your class the expected behavior during your absence. Review the rules and the consequences.

If you have prepared lesson plans for the substitute, you can E-mail your plans to the school secretary or to whomever has been designated to receive it. If the school does not have E-mail, you can E-mail to a colleague and ask that person to deliver the plan to the school for you.

Faxing your plan is another option. Many schools have fax machines that can receive your lesson plan. If you do not have a fax machine at home, you may be able to use a computer. Most up-to-date computers can send documents to a fax machine if they have had the proper program installed. If not, a neighborhood business, supermarket, or copy store will most likely have a fax machine you can use for a nominal charge.

Sample Lesson Plan for the Substitute Teacher

Lesson plans for Mrs. McDonough

8:00

Silent reading. Turn on CD player.

8:20

Flag salute, attendance, collect homework. Morning activity papers. Handwriting (lowercase) and vocabulary activity paper. These can be found in the double-door cabinet by the front door. They are on the top and middle shelves. Review behavior expectations.

9:00

As a class, read together the next story in the literature book: *Sarah Plain and Tall*.

9:30

Unofficial bathroom break. Let the students use the bathroom and get a drink. Dismiss one row at a time.

9:40

In the teacher's edition of the literature book, each story has oral daily language. Put the problems for Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday on the board. The students will copy the problems into their journals and make the corrections. Correct together as a class.

10:05

On top of my desk is a copy of the essay topic for the writing contest sponsored by the East River Boosters Club. Assign the topic, "Saying No to Drugs," review the criteria, and let the students begin their essay.

10:35

Recess

10:50

Review subtraction with regrouping. On top of my desk is a test on subtraction. If students finish early, instruct them to work on a Wizard activity. When everyone is finished with the test, correct as a class. Praise them for good work.

11:45

Read aloud from *Matilda*.

12:05

Lunch

12:45

Social studies. Read the next chapter aloud with the class. Discuss. Assign questions at the end of the chapter. Lauren and Michael will show you where we are in the book.

1:30

Dismissal today is early. See folder re: schedules. See team members Ms. Jones or Mr. Sanchez for assistance.

Note: The more complete your lesson plan is, the easier it will be for the substitute to implement it.

Chapter 19

The Employment Search

How do I prepare for all aspects of the job search?

Is There a Job for You?

You may have actually started with this section of the book. Looking for the right teaching position, in the right place, and with the right people is more than simply turning in an employment application at the three most convenient school districts. Your job search is the time when perspective employers discover to what degree you would be an asset to their school or district. It is the time when you confidently pull together what you know about teaching and children, and prepare yourself to put forth how this knowledge will benefit the constituency for whom you will work. It is of paramount importance that you always put your best foot forward.

Getting organized

One key to a successful teaching job search is to get organized. You need to plan a strategy, track your progress, and make modifications and adjustments as necessary. The employment search is more than getting an interview call and responding to questions. It is making a serious decision about your future. Create an Employment Tracking Chart. (See Employment Tracking Chart, page 119.) It will assist you in keeping track of where you applied, when you submitted applications, your initial contacts, when you received calls for interviews, any follow-up, and outcomes.

Another part of organizing your job search is to establish a placement or career file. This can either be set up at your university, or you can maintain and carry your own personal file from home. If you want to send out your placement materials directly, keep the original forms, letters, and documents in a folder. When they are needed for a prospective employer, you can simply make a copy and forward them along. You should include the following items in your placement file:

- ***Cover letter***
- ***Résumé with an emphasis on teaching***
- ***Letters of reference from people who have actually observed you teach and work with children***

- ***The names of professors who can attest to the quality of your work and leadership in class***
- ***Documents listing the courses in your major or teaching content area***
- ***Copies of test scores (MSAT, competency exams, language examinations, reading assessment results, and so forth)***
- ***Unofficial copy of your transcripts (official copy upon district request)***

When forwarding your placement file to the district, it should be clean, organized, professional looking, and have a table of contents for easy viewing. When you are called for your interview, it is a good idea to carry an extra set of your documents with you.

The process of looking for a teaching job is not a one-sided event. You need to assess your positive qualities and assets, and determine why a district would want to hire you. What qualities, experiences, and expertise do you possess that will make you a better choice than the interviewee who came before you and the one who will follow? How can you articulate these benefits to those who will make the decision about hiring you? You know yourself better than anyone else and you should be able to rationalize why you should be the one hired. If you can't sing your own praises, who will? Think about these questions and feel confident in the answers.

Deciding where to look and how to look are key decisions for the new applicant. Look where you think you would like to work and learn about the possibilities at the schools where you would like to teach. It helps to write all this down on paper and compare or prioritize your choices.

If you already know where you want to teach, contact those districts directly by phoning, writing, or visiting the district office to obtain an application. Complete the application, write a cover letter (you will need to write a few generic letters on your computer and save them for future correspondence), include a résumé, and return it to the personnel office as soon as possible.

If the districts are fairly local, it's not a bad idea to pick up the applications in person. You can get a sense of the district, the people, and the office. It's happened more than once that an interested personnel director has invited the visitor in for a spontaneous interview, so dress appropriately.

✦ *Your new teaching job is like a new relationship. Compatibility is important.*

If you do not know where you want to teach or where the opportunities are, you may want to check newspaper ads, the career center at the local college or university, teacher job fairs (information about them is available at school districts and university career centers), out-of-state department of education offices, overseas schools, a private school directory, local district offices, state directories, the Internet, or county offices of education. It's probably realistic to limit your initial search to a dozen districts.

The Résumé

Since the résumé is your first introduction, it is critical that it showcase who you are and what you have done. This document creates the first impression for the initial paper screening. Everyone submits a résumé, so the issue becomes how to make yours stand out in the crowd. Some basic suggestions are as follows:

- ***Select a high-quality, attractive-looking linen paper, either in white, gray, or buff. Stay***

away from bright colors. Have a computer and quality printer available for your final copies. If you don't own a computer, you can rent computer time in a local print store. They can also assist you with formatting.

- *There should be no spelling or grammatical errors, and the print should be clear. Select a conservative but pleasing font. Do not use Old English, "kid writing," or "cute teacher" fonts. The font should represent you as a professional.*
- *Some personnel directors recommend a résumé of one page, (but definitely not more than two) yet it should be as long as it takes to showcase your experience. Don't pad it, but make it clear what you have accomplished.*
- *Put your name at the top in bold type. Below your name, include your address, phone number (with area code), and E-mail address.*
- *A professional objective is an option, but it is usually unnecessary because of the specificity of the application.*
- *Include your educational background, citing dates and degrees in order (with the name of the university, school department, city, and state). Do not abbreviate anything! Your information has a richer feel if you write it out.*
- *Include the name of any credential or credential-in-progress, as well as the issuing institution, dates, and so on.*
- *Include your teaching or related experience with descriptions of responsibilities, in-service workshops attended, and other training received. Give the dates, school districts, and any other information that may seem relevant. Be sure to mention those that make your experience unique.*
- *Include substitute teaching and work as an instructional aide or volunteer. Be sure to give dates, school, district, and responsibilities.*
- *List other employment if it seems relevant. It may show that you had a responsible first career, responsible part-time jobs, leadership positions, or varied employment interests. Do not include babysitting, working with children of friends, or high school jobs.*
- *You may have been involved in your community as a volunteer. If so, list volunteer projects such as volunteering at schools, food banks, shelters, social action projects, community leadership, clubs, and charitable organizations.*
- *Be sure to include any honors or awards.*
- *Include a brief list of interests, such as sports, reading, travel, gardening, or horseback riding. Be sure that the listed areas are congruent with the image of your new chosen career. Schools like to hire people who have varied interests, talents, and abilities.*
- *Simply state that references are available upon request.*

A sample résumé is shown on page 120.

The Interview

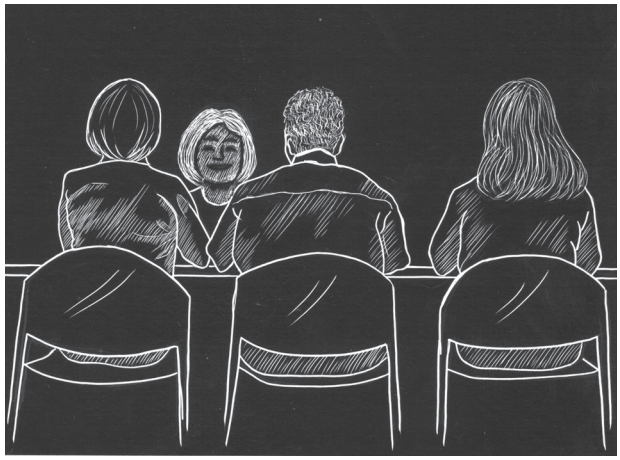
Most interviews for teaching positions ask both generic questions with which you should be familiar, and specific questions that your previous experiences should assist you in answering. If you are currently participating in student teaching or have extensive classroom experience, you will need only to organize that

experience into personal responses. If your experience is limited, your preparation will need to be more extensive.

Few can enter into an interview and be successful without advance thought and preparation. Prior to your interview, review some questions and answers, and practice talking about what you think you know. If you find deficiencies in your knowledge, this is the time to fill the void.

The following questions provide a springboard for practice. They are both generic and specific.

- ***Tell me about yourself. Why do you think you would be an effective teacher?***
- ***What can you tell me about your student teaching?***
- ***How would you establish an effective classroom management plan?***
- ***How would you teach a motivating math lesson?***
- ***Can you describe an effective social studies lesson?***
- ***Can you describe an effective physical education lesson?***
- ***What is thematic teaching?***
- ***How much should you rely on the textbook?***
- ***What was the best part of your student teaching? (Be sure to mention students in your answers.)***
- ***What was the worst part of your student teaching? (Again, mention students.)***
- ***What are your most positive personal characteristics?***



- ***How would you establish a reading program?***
- ***What do you know about a phonics approach to teaching reading?***
- ***What do you know about technology?***
- ***What experiences have you had that make you prepared for teaching?***
- ***Why have you chosen this district to apply to for a teaching position?***
- ***What are your long-term goals?***
- ***What were your personal positive educational experiences?***
- ***What are your strengths?***
- ***What do you consider to be your weaknesses?***
- ***If you could change something in education, what would it be?***
- ***What experiences have you had working with people of diverse ethnicity?***
- ***How would you conduct a parent conference?***
- ***What experiences have you had with students acquiring English?***
- ***What experience have you had with "at- risk" students?***

- ***How would you handle a problem in which a parent felt you were being unfair to his or her child?***
- ***When would you call the principal to intervene in a problem?***

Be prepared to explore a scenario and provide some solutions. These might be about students with reading problems, discipline problems, conflicts with another faculty member, or special-needs students.

Always turn a question into a positive point for you: If the interviewer asks you what you don't like, move to what you like. If the interviewer asks about your weaknesses, tell him or her the areas in which you are seeking professional growth.

Use real classroom examples, and show the interviewer that you care about children, learning, and school. If you can effectively respond to these questions, you will be able to handle yourself well with most issues that will be raised.

Be prepared for the interview by understanding some of the issues facing the district to which you are applying. All things being equal, the candidate who has some knowledge of the district and seems to understand the conditions of employment will have a better chance of being offered the job. You should spend a few hours prior to the interview learning about the district. Visit the public library in the area. Ask the librarian for newspapers that might have articles about the district, specific schools, events, and people related to the educational process. Stop by the district office and look at the bulletin boards, or ask if they have a newspaper scrapbook that you could peruse. Attend a school board meeting to gauge the climate in the district (you might even see the people who will interview you later on). Talk to people that live, work, and teach in the district. Their experience will prove to be invaluable. All of this helps in your preparation for the upcoming interview.

Arrive early, giving yourself enough time to freshen up and relax. When you are called into the interview, enter the room and make eye contact with each person. This is the time to smile, say hello, and extend your hand to meet those in the room. Offer additional copies of your résumé if it is evident that panel members don't have it.

When seated, get comfortable, look the person who is asking the question in the eye, but respond to everyone, glancing at each during your answer. Use a strong voice, changing the pitch and tone to maintain motivation. Provide examples of real classrooms, mentioning students often.

Most interviewers realize that for the beginning teacher, this is a fairly high-anxiety activity. They will usually attempt to put you at ease by an opening question about you. Never lose sight of the fact that you are the commodity, that you have value, and that you have a choice related in terms of this position.

Listen to the question thoroughly before you respond. Pause for a few seconds, collect your thoughts, and then provide a response with solid theory, practice, and classroom example. If you don't understand a question, ask the interviewer to clarify or repeat it. If you are unfamiliar with the terms used or simply don't have a clue, tell the interviewer you are not familiar with that term and ask for an explanation. Later, you can offer to learn more about it and include it in your repertoire.

Do not answer with one or two words; always provide an explanation. But keep your responses short and direct.

Never ask questions related to salary or benefits at the interview. This information is available from the personnel office and can be obtained at any time. Your inquiries should be related to instruction, professional growth opportunities, and issues impacting students.

At the conclusion of every interview the interviewer will ask, "Do you have a question for me?" This question is carefully framed to assess how you see yourself in this process. You should develop both a question to ask and an answer for the question in the likely event that it is thrown back at you. Examples of appropriate questions might include, "What are the opportunities for beginning teachers to participate in an innovative classroom technology initiative?" or "Would the district or school support collaborative literacy projects between the local high school and elementary school?" These questions reveal that the candidate has innovative plans beyond the four walls of the classroom.

The chair of the committee will provide a clear signal that the interview has been completed. At this cue, you may say your final thank you, shake hands again, and offer one more parting comment. "If I can provide any other information, or you should have any questions, please do not hesitate to call. Thank you for your time."

Regardless of the perceived outcome, it is prudent and in good form to immediately followup the interview with a short thank-you note.

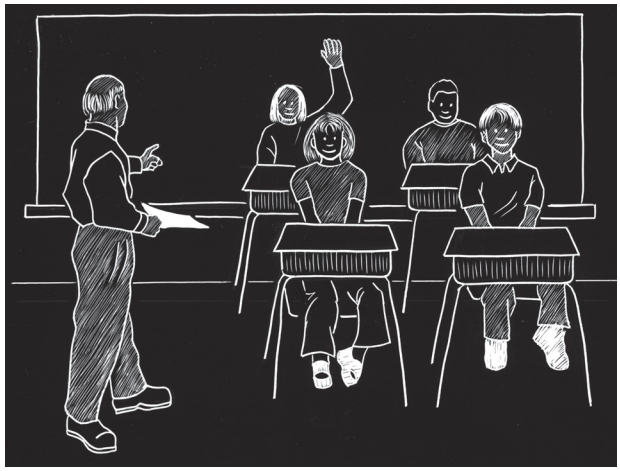
Conclusions and Reflections

You may now perceive teaching as more manageable and less overwhelming than you first imagined. You are certainly more prepared with ideas, knowledge, resources, strategies, enthusiasm, openness, and understanding than you were before.

Effective teachers take their students to greatness. They take a genuine interest in their students year after year. These teachers will teach well, will laugh when happy, and cheer together for a common cause.

Teaching is a great profession, and one that you can be proud of if you do it well. Great teachers have passion, and great teachers can ignite the spark to learn. Great teachers can make a difference in the lives of those they touch and teach, and great teachers can contribute to tomorrow's greatness.

You will be a part of it. Good luck!



Lesson Planning Template

Title of Lesson:

Grade Level:

Time:

Materials

Objectives

Initial Motivation or Anticipatory Set

Content/Presentation, Modeling, Demonstration

Checking for Understanding

Guided Practice

Closure

Independent Practice

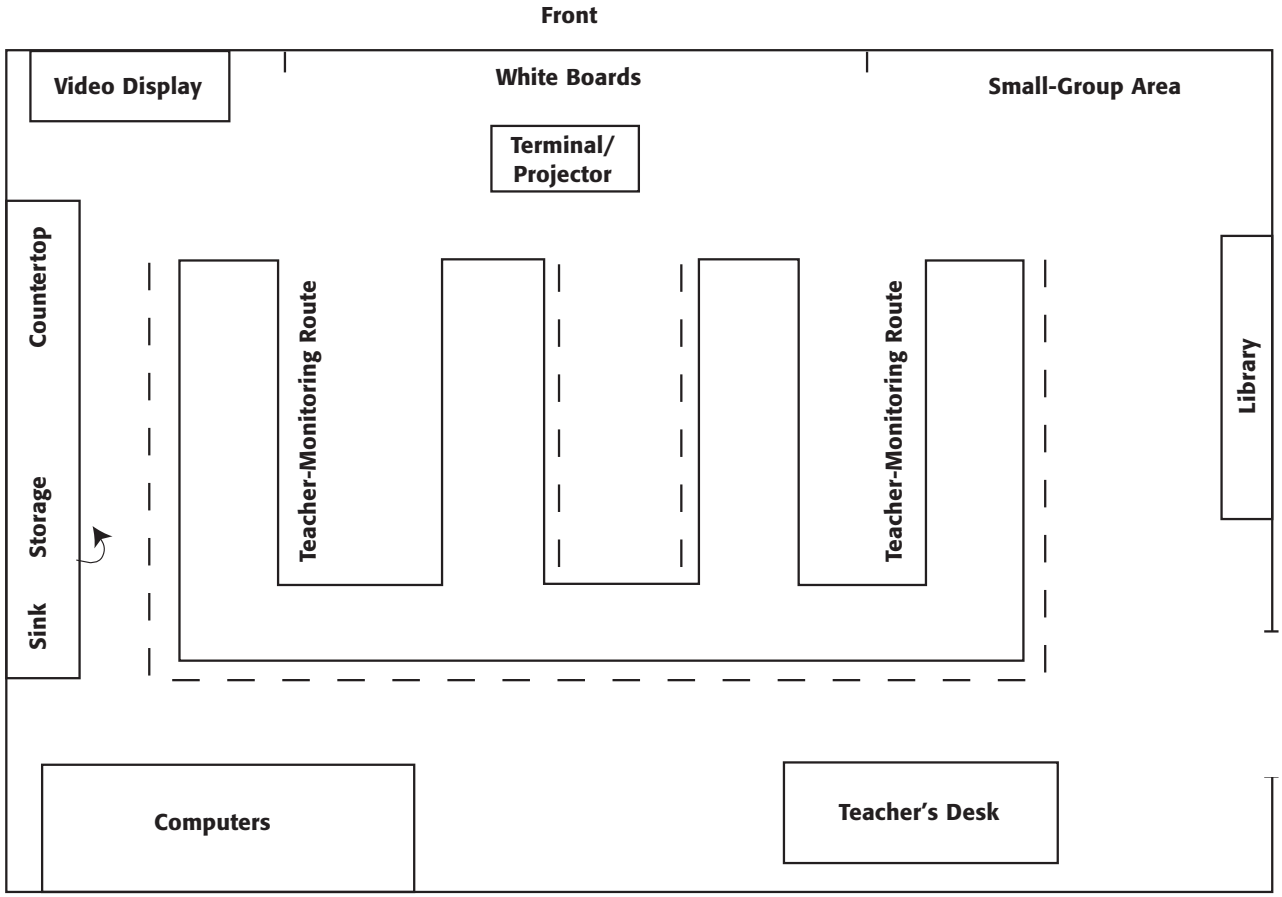
Assessment

Classroom Designs

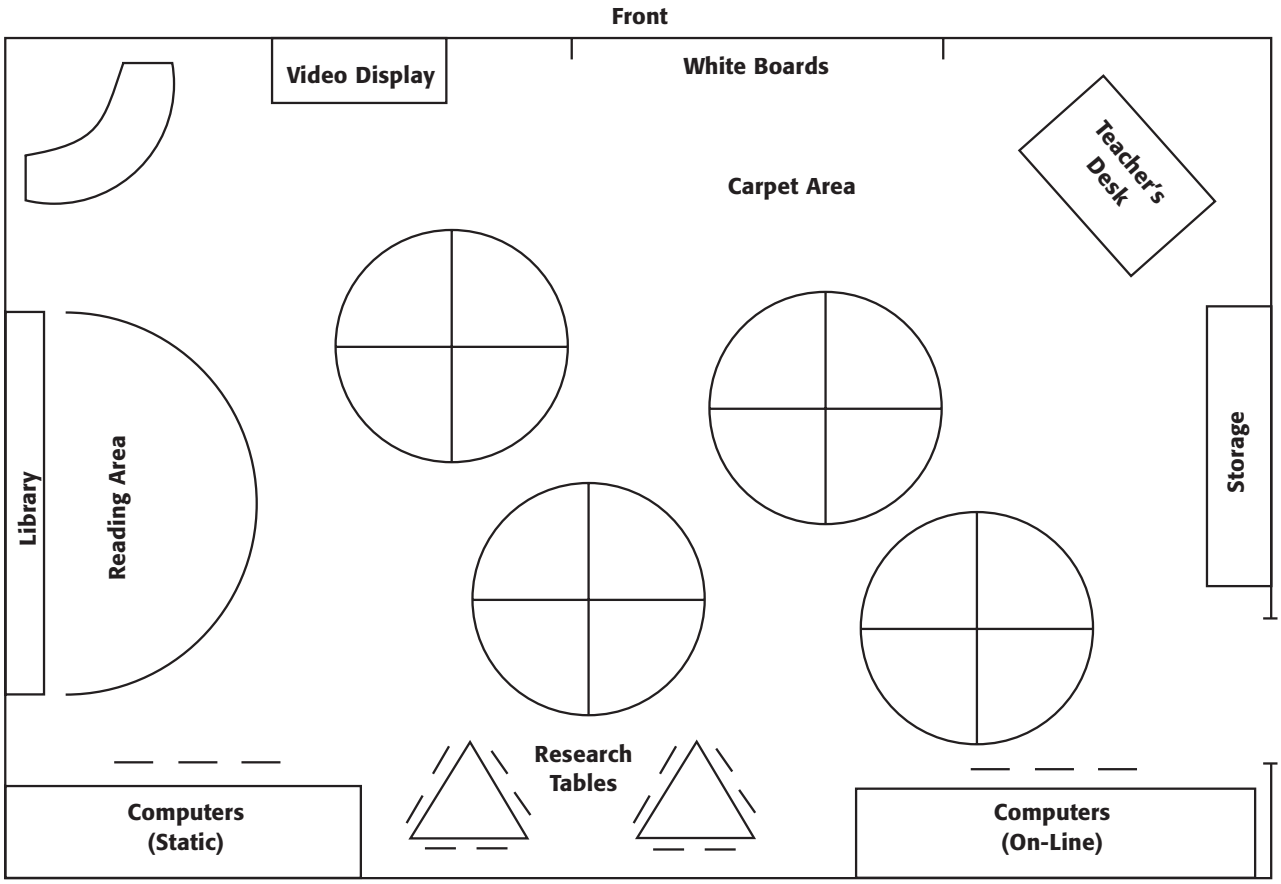
As discussed in Chapter 2, the manner in which a teacher designs the classroom is a reflection of one's teaching style, interests, abilities, and the needs of the class. The design is also indicative of how the teacher views the available delivery systems consistent with the curriculum.

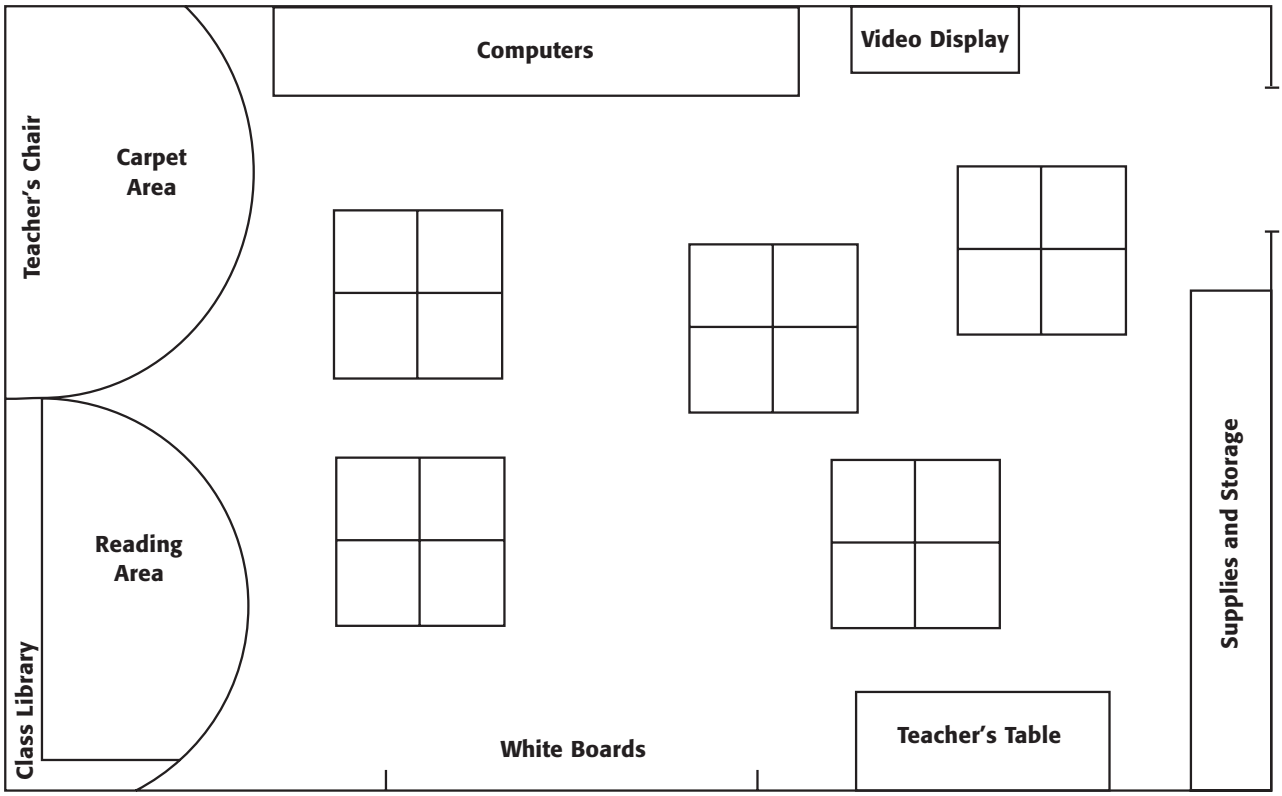
A more directed teacher would design a classroom environment quite different from a teacher that emphasizes cooperative learning or independent research.

The following charts offer some alternatives for the new teacher to use in initial planning. Using these as a foundation, develop a design that reflects the instructional needs of you and your students.

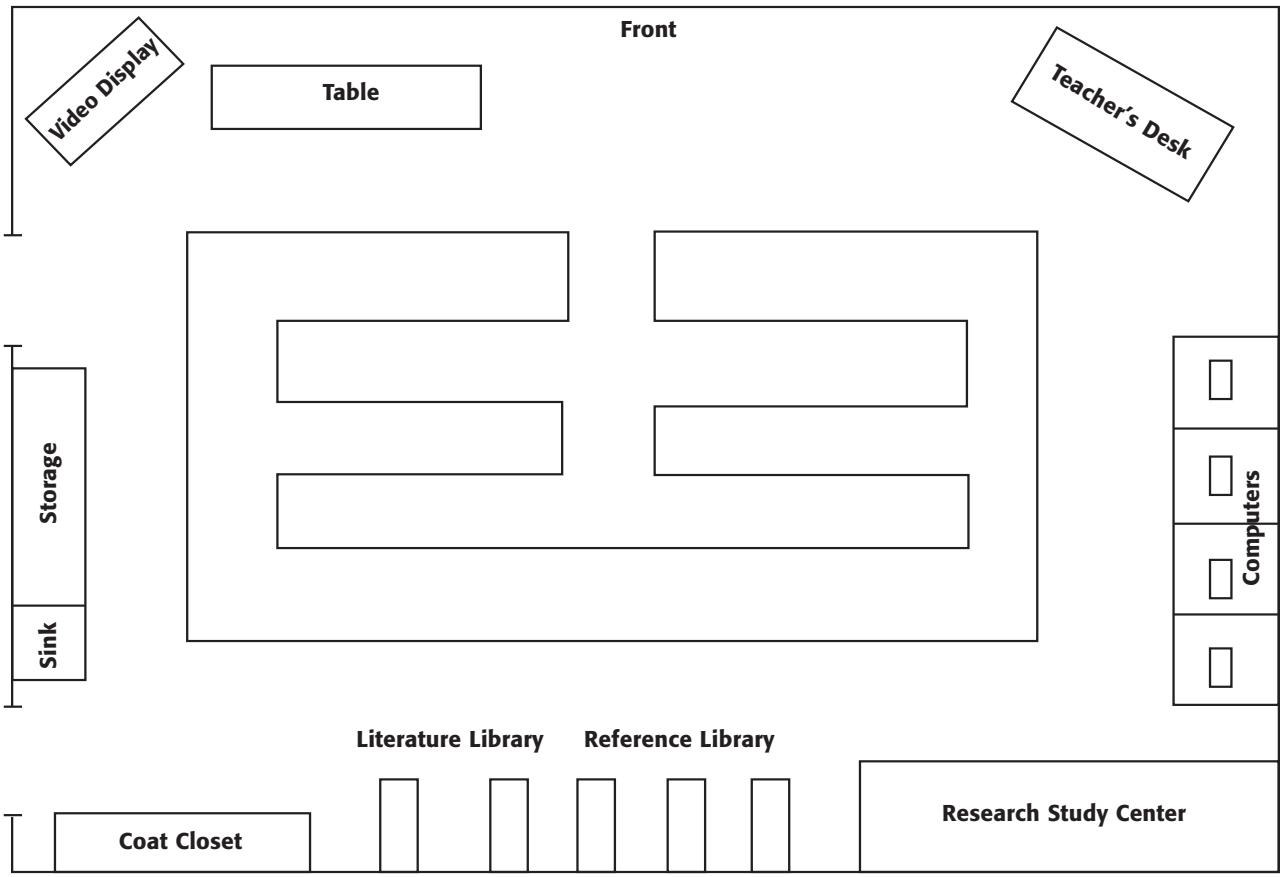


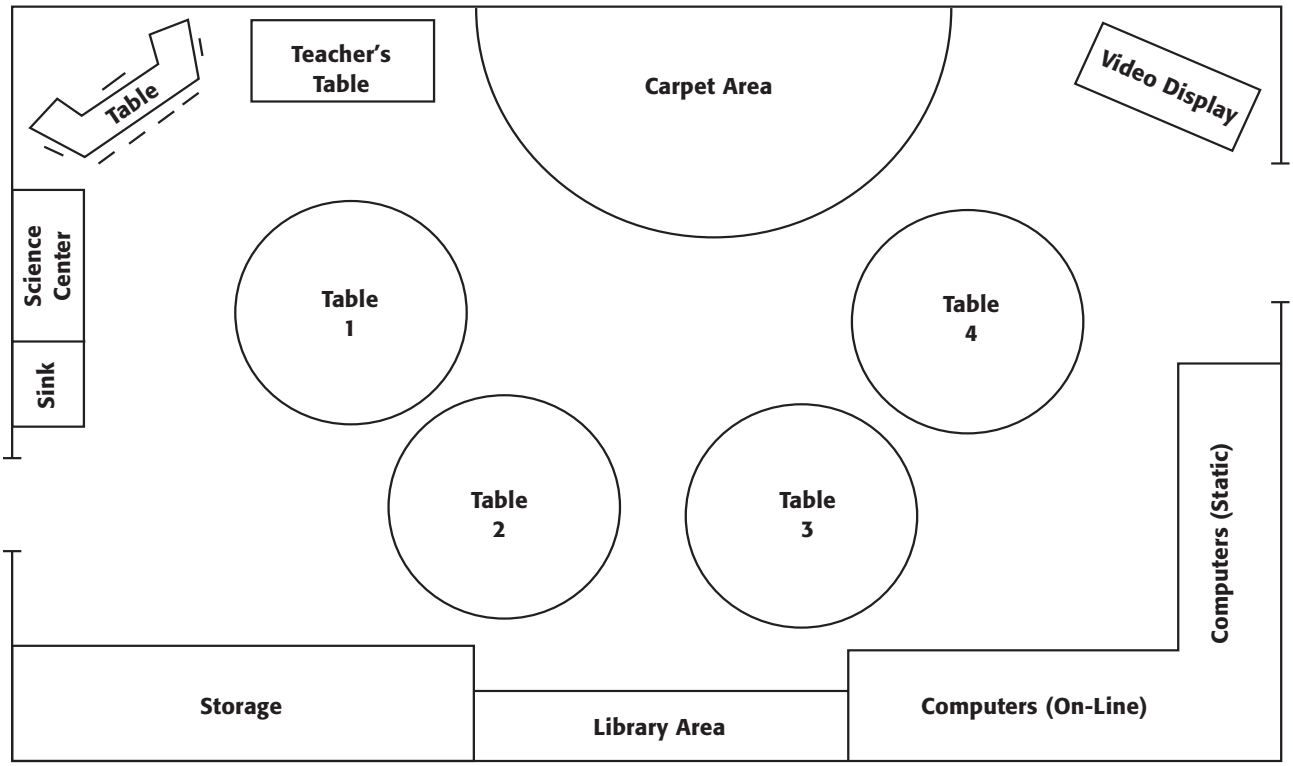
Classroom Designs





Classroom Designs





Home Call Record Sheet

Name of Student	Phone Number	Parent or Guardian	Date/time
Name of Student	Phone Number	Parent or Guardian	Date/time
Name of Student	Phone Number	Parent or Guardian	Date/time
Name of Student	Phone Number	Parent or Guardian	Date/time
Name of Student	Phone Number	Parent or Guardian	Date/time
Name of Student	Phone Number	Parent or Guardian	Date/time
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Name of Student	Phone Number	Parent or Guardian	Date/time
Name of Student	Phone Number	Parent or Guardian	Date/time

Employment Tracking Chart

	Date	District	Phone	Contact person	Application	Interview	Follow-up Notification	Disposition/ Date
1.								
2.								
3.								
4.								
5.								
6.								
7.								
8.								
9.								
10.								
11.								
12.								
13.								
14.								
15.								

Sample Résumé

Rachel Rose

4160 West Sierra Avenue
Sweet Water, California 90000
(555) 555-2222
rbkidd@email.com

Objective

To secure a professional, challenging, and growth opportunity teaching position in a multicultural educational setting/elementary school

Education

1994–1998 ■ California State University at Santa Clara
- B.A. Liberal Studies/Elementary Education
- Dean's List, four years

Credentials

1998 ■ Department of Education, California State University at Santa Clara
Elementary Education/Multiple Subjects
Cross-Cultural Emphasis/Bilingual

Teaching or Related Experience

1998–1999
Substitute teacher: 1998–1999 academic year. Elementary and junior high schools. Clear Mountain Unified School District, Sierra, California

Student Teaching 1998
- Deer Hill Elementary School, Green Valley Cove, California
  First-grade classroom teacher, all subject areas, limited English speakers, multicultural setting, special reading, integrated social studies units, Science Fair projects
- Running Water Elementary School, fourth grade
  All curriculum areas with emphasis on using computer technology integrated into the curriculum. Cross-age tutor program, "Little Buddies Literacy Project"

Instructional Assistant: 1995, *Clear Mountain Unified School District, third grade*

Other Employment

1995–1997
- Belcans Department Store, cashier and sales representative

1994–1995
- Glen Oaks Coffee Emporium, counter sales and evening accountant, floor manager (customer relations award)

Honors and Awards

Dean's List, four years
Who's Who in America College Freshmen
Special Recognition for chairing the Liberal Studies Club
Rotary Association Scholarship
Democratic Young Women's Scholarship

Interests

Reading, horseback riding, sailing, marathons, skating, flower arranging, writing

Travel

Summer travel in the Eastern United States, Western Europe, and Central America

References are available upon request.

Table of Charts

About the Author

Gary M. Garfield is a Professor of Education at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona. For over twenty years, his primary focus has been on the preparation of new teachers.

Areas of university teaching include reading instruction, educational psychology, dynamics of teaching in a pluralistic society, general methodology, organization of schooling, clinical supervision, early field experience and introduction to classrooms and schools, the professional classroom and social science methodology for the elementary school teacher. Garfield has presented at national, state, regional, and local professional conferences and workshops. He is an educational consultant for school districts within a variety of teaching areas. He has been awarded the Cal Poly University Distinguished Teacher Award and the Young Educator Award by Phi Delta Kappa, and has been recognized for innovation in the use of technology integrated into the curriculum.

He is coauthor of ten teacher resource books in the areas of preservice teaching, social studies, and technology integrated into the curriculum. Garfield holds California Teaching credentials in elementary and secondary education, special education and administrative services. He has also earned a doctorate in educational management.