

First Day Prep

Welcoming the first group of students into your classroom is a pivotal moment in becoming a professional. Plan purposely for that moment; design a welcoming learning community with reasonable expectations of students and yourself.

First Impressions

Your initial greeting to students and the classroom itself determine students' impressions of their learning community. Whether you teach in a kindergarten or high school, first impressions count. Therefore, create a welcoming environment, keeping these questions in mind:

- Do visual displays motivate and inspire? Are they colorful?
- Are classroom expectations posted?
- Is curriculum content reinforced?
- Is diversity evident through posters and bulletin boards?
- Is there space for student art or work samples?
- Does the desk arrangement match your teaching style and advocate on-task behavior and class discussion? (Desks arranged in a large U or double-U allow students to see and hear each other during discussions, while several desks grouped together work well for small-group activities.)
- Is there ample space for students to line up, for small-group activities, and for individual tutoring or learning centers?

Introductions

Students to students. Immediately begin building positive relationships among the students. Develop an activity that will engage students and introduce them to each other, such as finding out clues about partners and designing t-shirts for each other or recording things in common.

Teacher to students. Brainstorm creative ways to help students know you. You might display your favorites on a poster board or share a student memory from the grade level that you now teach. Tell why you chose to become an educator and let your students sense your enthusiasm for teaching.

Classroom Management

Behavior expectations. During the first days of the school year, initiate a proactive behavior plan of

three to five positive rules and corrective measures. To be effective, define rules in classroom-related terms, reinforcing them as students meet expectations, and adding new ones as needed for classroom roles and responsibilities.

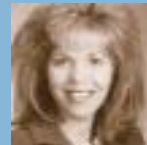
Teaching procedures. Introduce the concept of procedures by teaching only those applying to the first day. For example, the first time students return papers, model the steps they must follow when turning in work. Reinforce concepts, procedures, and expectations throughout the week.

Curriculum Preview

Preview curriculum with students. It signals that learning is a top priority, enhances content learning, and creates anticipation for future learning. Highlight a field trip or demonstrate a learning product. Students should engage in real work the first day, but it can be fun. End class with a "news brief" about what they will learn tomorrow.

Results

Expect a successful start to your first year of teaching! Establish a firm foundation for a positive learning community—plan with purpose and remain flexible. ■



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