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ABSTRACT

This text lists crucial activities a teacher can undertake in preparation for the first day of school. The suggestions are especially helpful for beginning, transfer, and student teachers. They may also be used by experienced teachers, administrators, and teacher educators. Suggestions are organized in the format of a 60-day countdown to the first day of school and are grouped in three categories: (1) getting acquainted; (2) classroom environment; and (3) instructional planning. The first category covers suggestions concerning instructional resources, school facilities, district and school policies, students, and community resources. Suggestions in the second category address topics of room arrangement and decoration, supplementary learning materials, organization of materials, discipline, classroom routines, class rosters, communication between home and school, communication between teacher and students, celebration of holidays and student birthdays, and student and teacher identification. Suggestions for instructional planning relate to long-range and day-to-day plans, supplementary learning materials, weekly schedules, pupil assessment, and information for substitute teachers. A 37-item bibliography is provided. (BC)

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COUNTDOWN TO THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL

PS 020895

A 60-Day Get-Ready Checklist For:

- ✓ Beginning Elementary Teachers
- ✓ Teacher Transfers
- ✓ Student Teachers
- ✓ Teacher Mentors
- ✓ Induction-Program Administrators
- ✓ Teacher Educators

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A 60-Day Get-Ready Checklist For:

Beginning Elementary
Teachers

Teacher Transfers

Student Teachers

Teacher Mentors

Induction-Program
Administrators

Teacher
Educators

by
Leo M. Schell
Paul Burden

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INTRODUCTION

Beginning teachers are faced with an overwhelming variety of professional challenges, particularly during the first few days of school. Like their more experienced co-workers, they are expected to enter the classroom equipped with (1) a thorough familiarity with their environment—its facilities, its personnel, and its policies and procedures; (2) a finely-tuned classroom management system that includes measures for effective student discipline; (3) a fair and an efficient system for student assessment; and (4) long-range and short-range instructional plans that meet curriculum standards and acknowledge students' varied abilities, interests, and backgrounds.

These are intimidating, yet mandatory, expectations. Research shows that effective classroom organization and management during the first few days of school are crucial in determining expectations, behavior patterns, and procedures that will persist throughout the school year (Evertson and Emmer 1982; Emmer, Evertson, and Anderson 1980; Vittetoe 1977).

In fact, research shows that much of the instructional and social interaction that occur during the months after September can be traced directly or indirectly to the way teachers initially establish instructional and social systems during the first days of school (Clark and Elmore 1979).

But it is not only management, organization, and social interaction that are determined during the first few days of school. A study of first-grade reading instruction (Anderson, Evertson, and Brophy 1979) found that teachers' beginning-of-the-year activities influenced students' end-of-the-year achievement. Because of the early underlying management structure of their classrooms, more effective teachers were able to accomplish higher goals, such as completing more extended reading projects, covering more content, and eliciting greater student participation (p. 222).

Because these first few days are so important, new teachers should engage in extensive planning and decision making *before* school starts (Evertson and Emmer 1982; Clark and Elmore 1979).

WHAT HELP DO NEW TEACHERS NEED TO SUCCEED?

Some school districts have tried to help new teachers to: (1) become familiar with school rules and procedures, facilities, and resources; (2) plan for instruction; (3) select instructional strategies; and (4) manage student behavior. To achieve these goals, school districts have implemented induction programs such as orientation workshops at the start of the school year, special meetings throughout the year for all beginning teachers, and mentoring programs.

After reviewing research on these types of induction practices, John Johnston (1981) concluded that beginning teachers regarded induction programs as strongly positive. A multitude of other researchers also report on the successes of induction programs (Johnston and Ryan 1983; Elias, Fisher, and Simon, 1980; McDonald and Elias, 1980; and Zeichner, 1979).

Unfortunately, many school districts lack the funds and personnel needed to implement effective induction programs. In an effort to develop a resource for these districts, we surveyed 300 experienced teachers in a wide variety of districts throughout Kansas and asked them to list the crucial things an inexperienced teacher should do *before* the first day of school. The 1,110 suggestions that we received seemed to fall into three categories, which serve as chapters in this booklet: (1) Getting Acquainted, (2) Classroom Environment, and (3) Instructional Planning. We have also included a special bibliography for those who would like to strengthen their knowledge of two of the most important areas of concern for beginners—classroom management and student discipline.

Many of the experienced teachers we surveyed claimed that preparing for the first days of school is extremely time-consuming—particularly for the newcomer who must set up classroom management systems and instructional plans from scratch. They suggested we help new teachers pace themselves through these preparations. For that reason, we have organized preparation activities into a 60-day countdown. We did not build in time for weekends; teachers may wish to do that themselves, however.

WHO CAN BENEFIT FROM THIS CHECKLIST?

The 60-day checklist in this booklet can be used by beginning teachers, transfer teachers, or student teachers as well as by administrators, experienced teachers, and college professors responsible for training new teachers.

Beginning Teachers

The 60-day checklist is designed, first and foremost, to help beginning teachers thoroughly prepare themselves for their new jobs during the two months before school starts.

Teacher Transfers

Teacher transfers who are about to enter a new learning environment will find that many of the checklist preparations, especially those that help newcomers become familiar with instructional resources, school and personnel facilities, district and school rules, and the local community, will make their transition a smoother one.

School Administrators

School administrators will find the booklet helpful in their efforts to train and guide new teachers. They should not just hand out the booklet and decide that training objectives have been met, however. Administrators should sit down with new teachers and review some of the most essential tasks to see that the teachers have adequately planned for them. For example:

- ▶ They should help new teachers formulate a daily and a weekly schedule. In this day of numerous special teachers and "pull-out" programs, scheduling demands experienced assistance.
- ▶ They should help new teachers develop a long-range schedule for several curricular areas. Then, for the first unit in each of these areas, suggest possible learning activities or resources in the school or community that the new teacher is unlikely to know about.
- ▶ They should relay information about the capabilities of the class as a whole and about specific children, and discuss how these capabilities might relate to instruction.
- ▶ They should arrange specific opportunities for new teachers to meet other personnel in nonworking as well

as working situations (e.g., during free periods and lunches).

- ▶ They should assist beginning teachers in developing a pupil assessment/grading system. This is a task that inexperienced teachers had little responsibility for during student teaching. Therefore, they need special help with it.

Experienced Teachers and Mentors

The 60-day checklist identifies specific areas (i.e., classroom management, student discipline, and pupil assessment) where experienced teachers could share valuable insights, experiences, and expertise with beginning teachers. The basic structure of the checklist can help official mentors and inservice teachers (teacher trainers) guide those under their care, step by step, through initial school preparations.

Student/Preservice Teachers

Teacher education courses and field experiences often do not prepare students for the unique circumstances that new teachers must deal with at the start of their first year of teaching. The 60-day checklist can be used to inform aspiring teachers of issues they must consider before their first year of teaching, such as devising classroom rules and a student assessment system. They can then seek additional information and assistance on these issues while they're still students.

College Professors

College professors could use the induction information contained in the 60-day checklist as the basis for revising field experiences in teacher-education courses. In most cases, these experiences do not address the difficulties beginning teachers typically face. For example, the objectives of field experiences should be broadened to show students how to become familiar with important aspects of the school environment, such as: instructional resources; school facilities, personnel, and service; school rules and procedures; and community resources. Field experiences should also provide opportunities for students to see how experienced teachers arrange classrooms, organize materials, handle discipline problems, and deal with other aspects of classroom management. And they should familiarize teacher trainees with short-

and long-term planning and pupil assessment. All of these areas are covered in the 60-day checklist.

BEFORE SCHOOL STARTS

In many cases, the education profession has underestimated the scope and difficulty of the tasks inexperienced teachers face in preparing for the beginning of their first school year. And unfortunately, it is extremely difficult for teachers who do not begin school satisfactorily to "play catch up." Beginning teachers need help *before* school starts. The 60-day checklist and the bibliography for classroom management and discipline in this book can help them meet the awesome challenges of the opening days of school.

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Your first step in preparing for the school year is to become thoroughly familiar with your new teaching environment. This environment includes: (1) instructional resources; (2) school facilities, personnel, and services; (3) your students-to-be; (4) district and school rules, procedures, and policies; and (5) the local community.

The more knowledgeable you are about each of these areas, the more confident you will feel about your job, and the less time you'll need to devote to these areas during the first few weeks of school when time is at a premium.

DAYS 60–56

INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES

CHECK WHEN
COMPLETED ✓

1 Obtain and study copies of all assigned and available pupil textbooks and workbooks and/or teacher's guides to determine:



- ▶ Basic instructional goals
- ▶ Subject matter to be taught
- ▶ Scope and sequence of skills to be taught
- ▶ Suggested and possible instructional strategies
- ▶ Your own and the texts' instructional strengths and weaknesses
- ▶ Possible learning centers you could make
- ▶ Available tests or other evaluation instruments
- ▶ "Breadth" of instruction—remedial, enrichment, review
- ▶ Possible overlap or integration of curricular areas

2 Occasionally, schools have developed their own curriculum guides. Ask if there are ones that pertain to you. Examine them to learn:



- ▶ General instructional goals
- ▶ Instructional topics
- ▶ Scope and sequence of skills to be taught
- ▶ Suggested instructional activities

3 For each curricular area, make an outline of specific topics you must cover during the year (save specific planning for later).

4 Ask about any special or experimental programs that you *must* or *may* incorporate into instructional time. Examples include the following:

- ▶ Career education
- ▶ Economic education
- ▶ Energy education
- ▶ Art appreciation
- ▶ Reading awards
- ▶ Head Start
- ▶ "Hands-on" science

Note: If you plan to incorporate any of these (or, if you are asked to manage or develop one of these programs), you may need extra preparation time for this. Schedule this preparation into Days 22–18.

5 Learn what general resources are available at school to supplement textbooks and workbooks. Resources include:

- ▶ Worksheets, cassette tapes, visual aids, and paperback-book collections that accompany textbooks
- ▶ Library and/or media resources

DAYS 55–53

FACILITIES, PERSONNEL, AND SERVICES

CHECK WHEN
COMPLETED ✓

- 1** Become familiar with your classroom.
- ▶ Examine, organize, and inventory all school-issued textbooks, workbooks, and school supplies. When possible, restock where needed.
 - ▶ Check out storage areas available for additional supplementary materials. (Organizing these areas comes later.)
 - ▶ Make note of desk styles (yours and students') as well as presence of book-cases, display tables, and special equipment such as computers. (Actual room arrangement comes later.)

2 Become acquainted with the school building: its rooms, equipment, and grounds. Be sure to locate:

- ▶ Rooms for special classes—music, remedial reading, speech therapy, computer instruction, and so on
- ▶ Storage rooms
- ▶ Lost and found
- ▶ Duplication facilities
- ▶ Audiovisual equipment
- ▶ Fire alarms and extinguishers
- ▶ Recess areas

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3 Meet as many fellow teachers as possible.

- ▶ Drink coffee together.
- ▶ Go out to lunch together.
- ▶ Visit rooms.
- ▶ Ask questions.

4 Learn about special administrative and teaching personnel within the school and the services they provide. Personnel may include:

- ▶ Assistant principal
- ▶ School counselor
- ▶ Remedial reading teacher
- ▶ Vocal/instrumental music teacher
- ▶ Physical education teacher
- ▶ Art teacher
- ▶ Bilingual or English as a Second Language teacher
- ▶ Speech therapist
- ▶ Special education teacher
- ▶ Librarian/media center director
- ▶ Paraprofessionals/teacher aids

5 Learn about teaching personnel located in the central office and their services. Personnel may include:

- ▶ School psychologist
- ▶ Reading-resource teacher
- ▶ Media director

6 Become acquainted with (or at least get the names of) all other education support personnel within your school, such as:

- ▶ Nurse
- ▶ Secretaries
- ▶ Custodians
- ▶ Cooks
- ▶ Bus drivers

7 Learn about special school services for students from low-income families, such as:

- ▶ Medical or dental help
- ▶ Clothing distribution
- ▶ Breakfast programs
- ▶ After-school tutoring programs

Note: You may wish to list all important names and phone numbers in the back of this booklet (page 56).

DAYS 52-50

DISTRICT AND SCHOOL RULES, PROCEDURES, AND POLICIES

1 Learn exactly what your responsibilities and duties will be in regard to:

- ▶ Playground duty

- ▶ Lunchroom duty
- ▶ Lunch-money collection
- ▶ Bus loading/unloading
- ▶ Open houses
- ▶ PTA/PTO meetings
- ▶ Committee membership
- ▶ Extracurricular activities, such as clubs, organizations, and athletics

2 Become thoroughly familiar with school procedures and policies that concern the actions of *students*, such as:



- ▶ Fire, earthquake, and tornado drills
- ▶ Student absences and attendance
- ▶ Student illness or injury during school
- ▶ Use of tools and equipment
- ▶ Discipline—what is prohibited, what is permissible; and under what conditions
- ▶ Classroom parties and field trips
- ▶ Lunchroom rules
- ▶ Restroom rules
- ▶ Playground rules
- ▶ School-bus rules
- ▶ Dress code

Note: This information may be included in a school or district handbook. If so, obtain one and read it from cover to cover.

3 Learn about school procedures and policies that directly concern you and your teaching, such as:



- ▶ Unexpected personal illness
- ▶ Personal leave (medical or business reasons)
- ▶ Teacher aides
- ▶ Classroom volunteers (parents or older students)
- ▶ Faculty meetings
- ▶ Use of office telephone

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- ▶ Mail delivery
- ▶ “Chain of command” to follow in case of complaint
- ▶ Lesson-plan requirements (if any)
- ▶ Student records to be kept; forms to be filed
- ▶ Collecting money from students—when it is permissible and how it should be done
- ▶ Dress code

Note: Once again, this information may be included in a school or district handbook.

DAYS 49–47

YOUR STUDENTS

- 1** Examine the cumulative record folders for each student.

- 2** Estimate the academic range, mean, and composition of the class. Use this data to *tentatively* answer questions such as:
 - ▶ Is the group about average in reading (math, spelling, and so on)?
 - ▶ Will grade-level texts and supplementary materials be appropriate?
 - ▶ Is there a larger than expected number of high or low achievers?
 - ▶ What might be the best way to group these students in reading (math, spelling, and so on)?



3 Study the remaining contents of the children's folders and/or portfolios.

For each child:

- ▶ Examine any school photographs that may be enclosed.
- ▶ Look for information about the family/home situation. Note names of parents/guardians. Don't assume these persons have the same last name as the child.
- ▶ Note any outstanding strengths, weaknesses, interests, and talents—both academic and nonacademic.
- ▶ Record the child's birthday on a room calendar.
- ▶ Notice if he or she was enrolled in any special programs for learning disabilities, speech therapy, gifted education, and so on.
- ▶ Make note of any physical and/or learning disabilities.
- ▶ Make note of any chronic health problems, including allergies.
- ▶ Note any mainstreamed children with special needs—which subjects they will be in your room for and specific needs they may have.
- ▶ Determine if there are any children who, for religious reasons (a) cannot participate in some school activities or have some restrictions on them (for example, adherents of some religions don't take part in the flag salute; some don't use medical services or physicians; some don't observe the religious aspect of Christmas.); (b) will participate in some religious holidays or activities that other children won't, such as Yom Kippur and Passover (Jewish) or Ramadan (Muslim).

- 4** Talk with children's former teachers about children's:
- ▶ Strengths and weaknesses
 - ▶ Special needs

5 Talk with your building principal about the children in general at your school as well as about specific children in your class.

6 Prepare a file folder for each child in which you store room records, work samples, and other information throughout the year.

A Word of Caution: Try to use students' previous records objectively. Do not let negative or unusual information lead you to negative opinions about children; rather, use all information to help you design instruction that recognizes each child's strengths, background, and personal learning needs.

DAY 46

YOUR LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

- 1** Find and study a map of the school district.

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2 Learn about:

- ▶ Most common occupations in the community and of your students' parents
- ▶ Degree of transiency in community
- ▶ Private and/or parochial schools in the area—who attends these schools and how this affects your enrollment



3 If you have time, drive through the district and locate the homes of your students. Note any obvious things that would help you better understand your students and the community, such as the following:

- ▶ Size and newness of house, trailer, or apartment building
- ▶ Degree of isolation
- ▶ General upkeep (paint, roof, and so on)
- ▶ Landscaping and grounds
- ▶ Number and type of vehicles
- ▶ Items of interest (e.g., TV satellite dish, orchard, auto-repair garage, in-home business)



4 Find out bus “pick-up” and “drop-off” times as well as length of time children spend on a bus. This may help you estimate how early children have to get up, how early they should go to bed, or what they’ve done before they get to school.



DAYS 45-43

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

CHECK WHEN
COMPLETED ✓

1 Investigate resource facilities in the community that can enrich your students' learning experiences. Many communities have more than you might expect. Look for:



- ▶ Museums, historic sites, and libraries
- ▶ Places of business that could give tours, such as banks, industries, post offices, dairies, orchards, airports, lumberyards, grocery stores, and newspaper plants
- ▶ Organizations such as a local historical society or a Chamber of Commerce

Note: Ask fellow teachers/administrators, parents, and neighbors about community resources to tap.

2 Inquire about *people* in the community who can provide special services to supplement your instruction, such as:



- ▶ Collectors of all sorts
- ▶ Owners of unusual pets
- ▶ Local artists and craftspersons
- ▶ Amateur radio operators
- ▶ Astronomy buffs
- ▶ Citizens with vocational knowledge, such as county-extension agents, mechanics, accountants, florists, salespersons, masons, equipment operators, meteorologists, veterinarians, law-enforcement officers, attorneys, and bankers

Note: Again, ask fellow teachers/administrators, parents, and neighbors for suggestions.

3 List tentative classroom visitors and field trips.

- ▶ Try to match these with major curricular topics.

Successful teachers know how to maintain a classroom environment that is both stimulating and well organized.

Room arrangement and displays must be attractive, but also functional. One experienced teacher advises, "At the beginning, KISS (keep it strictly simple)." If you schedule only a few simple traditional activities the first week, your room arrangement and displays can be correspondingly simple. Then you can add or rearrange furniture, bulletin boards, and learning centers as you gain confidence and control.

Quality instruction requires that you use materials other than assigned textbooks and workbooks. If you begin collecting and organizing these before school begins, you will not only be able to plan richer, more varied lessons, you will avoid rushing around in last-minute desperation to locate old magazines, scraps of wallpaper, or other materials.

The biggest fear most inexperienced teachers have is that of pupil discipline. If you are organized and provide interesting learning experiences, discipline problems will probably be minimal. However, a well-constructed set of house rules, fair and accurate assessment measures, and open communication with parents can probably prevent even minimal problems.

DAY 42

ROOM ARRANGEMENT

CHECK WHEN
COMPLETED ✓

- 1** Determine room arrangement.
- Include:
- ▶ Location of teacher's desk
 - ▶ Arrangement of pupils' desks
 - ▶ Location of additional furniture, such as file cabinets and display tables
 - ▶ Location of centers, such as a reading center (independent reading) and an art corner

Note: You may want to consider using traditional rows for the first few weeks. Experienced teachers say this layout leads to the fewest number of discipline problems. Experienced teachers also suggest you use learning centers sparingly during the first couple of weeks—until you have established teacher control.

- 2** Inquire about any extra furniture you may want, such as a table for science displays, a plant stand, bookcases, a room divider, a portable chalkboard, and a wheeled cart. Obtain whatever of these is available.

DAYS 41–35

ROOM DECORATION

CHECK WHEN
COMPLETED ✓

- 1** Prepare colorful, attractive bulletin boards.
- ▶ Some schools provide rolls of scalloped corrugated paper for borders as well as pin-tack plastic letters. Inquire.
 - ▶ Make bulletin boards functional, not merely decorative. They should solicit student input and relate to material that will be covered the first week or two.
 - ▶ Consider using a theme or color scheme for your displays, such as Winnie the Pooh, Sesame Street, or Knights of the Round Table—or an orange-yellow-red-brown (autumn) color scheme.
 - ▶ Consider decorating one bulletin board or wall space with only a border and title on which you can display students' work immediately. (For example, the border and lettering could be made of thick "lasso" twine and the title could read: "Good Work Roundup.")
 - ▶ Devote one display area to introducing your students to one another. You might title the bulletin board "Sign In!" On the first day of school, take an instant photograph of each student. Tack the photos to the board and ask students to sign their names next to their photos.

- 2** Display any pertinent pictures, posters, charts, and maps.



3 Consider a plant or two and possibly even an aquarium (if you know enough about tropical fish to adequately care for an aquarium).



DAYS 34–33

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS I

1 In your classroom, gather the supplementary materials you located in your school during Days 60–56 as well as any you may have at home. These may include:



- ▶ Pre-made bulletin boards
- ▶ Games and devices
- ▶ Visual aids (pictures, illustrations)
- ▶ Cassette tapes
- ▶ Sample art projects
- ▶ Seatwork sheets
- ▶ Ideas for activities
- ▶ Charts, maps, graphs
- ▶ Playground games
- ▶ Indoor-recess games
- ▶ Party games

2 Ask if you have any discretionary money with which to purchase other supplementary materials. If so, acquire some quality materials for use during the year by:



- ▶ Checking school supply catalogs that your school has on hand

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- ▶ Combing through advertisements in recent issues of *NEA Today* and teacher magazines such as *Instructor* and *Learning*
- ▶ Visiting a local teacher store
- ▶ Asking teachers for recommendations
- ▶ Checking out garage sales for inexpensive paperback books

Note: To make sure these materials support your instructional goals for the year, refer to the instructional outlines you made during Days 60–56.

DAYS 32–30

ORGANIZING MATERIALS

1 Set up a file system for storing district and school communications. These include:



- ▶ Policy handbook
- ▶ Correspondence from your principal, superintendent, and other supervisors
- ▶ Correspondence from professional organizations

2 Store supplementary materials on shelves, in boxes, and/or in file drawers according to curricular areas or months.



3 Almost any kind of “junk” can be used for art projects and educational games. Start a junk collection by designating two large boxes or bins as the “junk depot.” Once school starts, encourage students to help you bring in and save:



- ▶ Wallpaper sample books

- ▶ Egg cartons
- ▶ Plastic-foam meat trays
- ▶ Toilet-tissue cores
- ▶ Paper-towel cores
- ▶ Carpet squares
- ▶ Rags and fabric scraps
- ▶ Used computer paper
- ▶ Blank newsprint from a local newspaper or printer
- ▶ Aluminum TV-dinner trays and pie pans
- ▶ Banners or signs from grocery-store displays (to use as bulletin board headings)
- ▶ Old magazines, particularly ones with big illustrations, photos, or colorful ads
- ▶ Large cartons: TV, refrigerator, stove
- ▶ File cards written on only one side
- ▶ Baby-food jars (to hold paint in easel trays)
- ▶ Christmas and other holiday greeting cards
- ▶ Milk cartons of all sizes and materials

Note: Once your collection fills two boxes, you'll need to start organizing materials on closet shelves or in a wall organizer (which can be made from crates or sturdy boxes).

DAY 29

DISCIPLINE, CONTROL, AND MANAGEMENT

1 Formulate a few concise rules for expected behavior in your classroom. ☐
Don't assume pupils know what you expect.

- ▶ Choose only rules you "can't live with-

out” and are willing to enforce consistently.

- ▶ State rules positively, such as:
 - Listen attentively.
 - Raise your hand and wait to be recognized.
 - Walk in school.

2 Consider writing these rules on a poster for display and discussion the first day of school.

3 Formulate specific consequences for failure to follow rules, and plan to discuss those consequences with students on the first day of school.

- ▶ Include only those consequences that you are willing to implement consistently with all children.
- ▶ Include one initial warning per rule infraction.
- ▶ Consult experienced teachers and/or principal for feedback on your ideas.

4 Formulate some ways to positively reinforce good behavior.

- ▶ Have handy some reinforcers, such as inexpensive stickers, awards, or fill-in notes to parents.
- ▶ Consult other teachers for reinforcement ideas.
- ▶ Set goals or standards and determine what will happen when these are followed or met. Plan to discuss these with students.

DAY 28

ROUTINES AND PROCEDURES

CHECK WHEN
COMPLETED ✓

- 1** Plan some organizational method for handling pupils' daily work.
- ▶ Designate one general box or basket where students can place completed work for your assessment.
 - ▶ In an open area, place individual baskets, folders, large envelopes or mailboxes made from cardboard boxes (one per child) where students can store notes to parents, assessed work, and any other materials that should go home at the end of each day.

- 2** Formulate a way of assessing daily work that is compatible with the district assessment system (which may include a specific grading system, specially designed report cards, portfolios, and so on).

- ▶ First, find out what other teachers do.
- ▶ Then decide what will be assessed—all or selected daily work. Also decide whether students' handwriting, spelling, and written composition, will be assessed in other curricular areas (reading, science, social studies).

- 3** Formulate a standard policy for homework assignments.
- ▶ Determine frequency and approximate amount (in hours) of work.

- ▶ Designate an area of the chalkboard for displaying all homework assignments.
- ▶ Plan to discuss your policy with students.

4 Formulate procedures for each of the following:

- ▶ Lining up for leaving room at lunch, recess, dismissal
- ▶ Distributing, turning in, and picking up assignments
- ▶ Sharpening pencils
- ▶ Using bathroom
- ▶ Writing name and date on assignments
- ▶ Taking lunch count
- ▶ Recording completed seatwork and homework assignments

5 Determine whether you want student helpers. If so, determine what tasks pupils can be responsible for, how you will determine helpers, and for how long a pupil will hold a particular job. Have a job chart ready on the first day. Consider these tasks:

- ▶ Playground-equipment manager
- ▶ School messenger
- ▶ Light switcher
- ▶ Line leaders
- ▶ Pencil sharpener
- ▶ Classroom librarian
- ▶ Paper collector
- ▶ Restroom monitor
- ▶ Chalkboard eraser
- ▶ Window and blind opener
- ▶ Plant waterer
- ▶ Lunch-money clerk

DAY 27

CLASS LISTS/ROSTERS

CHECK WHEN
COMPLETED ✓

1 Prepare a generic class roster that has student names on the left and five or six blank columns on the right. Make several copies to use for tracking the following:



- ▶ Student assignments
- ▶ Skills mastery
- ▶ Book orders
- ▶ Picture money
- ▶ Field-trip permission slips

Note: Don't record names and other information in your grade book for at least one full week; some students may be switched to other rooms and/or transfer students may enter school several days late.

2 Consider making a file card for each child that provides you instantly with basic data, such as full name, names of legal guardian(s), home address and phone, birth date, bus route, any allergies, and any regular medications taken.



DAY 26

HOME-SCHOOL COMMUNICATION

CHECK WHEN
COMPLETED ✓

1 Consider sending parents/guardians an introductory letter. The letter might include:

- ▶ Something about your background
- ▶ Some ideas you plan for the year
- ▶ An explanation of your assessment/grading system
- ▶ An open invitation for parents/guardians to visit your classroom
- ▶ Your sincere desire for good school-home communication throughout the year
- ▶ An invitation for parents/guardians to share their information or skills with your pupils, when and if appropriate
- ▶ Your policy on homework
- ▶ A suggestion or two on how family members can help children with school work
- ▶ Supplies needed
- ▶ Special school dates/events

Note: Don't overwhelm parents/guardians; keep the letter brief. Don't include information that is readily available elsewhere (local newspaper, school-policy handbook, school newsletter); make your letter specific to your room.

2 Also consider sending a progress report home once a week during the first several weeks of school. The report could:

- ▶ Note positive accomplishments
- ▶ Include a brief checklist of work habits

- or level of accomplishments
- ▶ Require that a parent or guardian sign the note and return it through the student the following school day

Note: If you decide to send home a weekly progress report during the first few weeks, design its basic layout today.

DAY 25

STUDENT-TEACHER COMMUNICATION

- 1 Consider sending each of your students a note or postcard before school starts.

It could include:

- ▶ A personal and positive welcome
- ▶ Some activities you plan for the year
- ▶ A request that students bring in something special to show and discuss the first day of class

DAY 24

BIRTHDAYS AND OTHER CELEBRATIONS

- 1 Consider hanging a poster or calendar that displays every child's birthday. A poster could be an "All Aboard the Birthday Train" in which each car of a train represents a month and students' names and birthdays are written in corresponding cars.

2 Decide when to celebrate birthdays that fall on weekends or holidays or during the summer.

- ▶ Weekend and holiday birthdays could be celebrated the following school day.
- ▶ Summer birthdays could be celebrated on one's "sixth-month" birthday.

3 Make or buy a birthday card for each child. File each card so it's ready on a child's birthday. On the appropriate day, invite all students in the room to sign it.

4 Plan how you want to celebrate birthdays.

- ▶ Consult your principal or school handbook on party policies, including refreshments.
- ▶ Determine whether you want to present each child with a small gift, such as a pencil or bookmark. If so, purchase the object now, in bulk.
- ▶ Determine whether you want to grant special birthday privileges, such as being first in line all day, getting to choose a book for shared reading, sharing special snacks from home, and so on.
- ▶ Determine whether for primary grade pupils you want to have a decorated "birthday chair," a paper crown, and so on.
- ▶ Decide how and when to sing "Happy Birthday."

5 Many primary grade teachers have a "Lost Tooth Club." Other teachers

question whether this is wise and desirable. They believe it discriminates against children who are late maturing and won't lose teeth until next year or until the summer. Determine what your policy will be on this matter if it is applicable.

6 Most schools have very specific policies for celebrating major holidays, such as Halloween, Christmas, Hanukkah, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Easter, and Passover. Inquire about these policies, so that you'll have a feel for what will be expected. No other preparation is necessary at this time.



DAY 23

STUDENT/TEACHER IDENTIFICATION

- 1** Prepare a name tag (or materials for a name tag) for each child's desk.
- ▶ Many teachers recommend having name tags affixed to desks when pupils arrive the first day. If you do this, then also make a seating chart.
 - ▶ Some teachers like to have pupils choose their own seats the first day and/or make their own name tags. In either of these cases, help students affix tags to the front of their desks so that *you* can read them easily.
 - ▶ For young bus riders, put bus number or bus name on tags.



CHECK WHEN
COMPLETED ✓

2 Also make name tags for other “personal spaces” in your room, such as student lockers, cubbyholes, or coat hangers. Affix with strong tape.



3 Post your name, class level, and room number outside your classroom door where students can see them the first day of school.



Effective teaching demands careful instructional planning. It is easy for beginning teachers to fall into the "night-before trap" in which they ask themselves two hours before bedtime, "What am I going to do in social studies/health/language arts tomorrow?" For these novices, teaching can quickly become routine, textbook-shackled, and possibly even disorganized. A crucial chapter may never get finished, important skills may never get mastered, worthwhile learning experiences may get ignored, and the special learning needs of individual students may go unattended. As a result, children's learning suffers. And the teacher constantly feels harried, at loose ends, and perplexed.

This section helps you establish techniques in long-range planning, specific day-to-day planning, and student assessment that will lead to exciting, efficient, individualized instruction.

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DAYS 22-18

LONG-RANGE PLANS

CHECK WHEN
COMPLETED ✓

1 Pull out the topic outlines you constructed for each curricular area during Days 60-56.

2 Use these outlines and all related texts and workbooks to make rough yearly schedules for each curricular area. (See sample next page.) In drawing up rough schedules, consider the following:

- ▶ Solicit advice from other teachers, particularly from those who teach your same grade level.
- ▶ If it makes no difference where in the year topics fall, assign the topics you consider most important or most “teachable” early enough in the year that you won’t omit or slight them as time runs out. Note that sometimes topics are sequential (built upon previous ones) or are more appropriate for “older” (end-of-the-year) children rather than for “younger” (beginning-of-the-year) ones. Plan accordingly.
- ▶ Whenever possible, try to integrate curricula. For example, if curricula objectives for the year call for studying folktales in reading and teaching folktale writing in language arts, schedule these lessons during the same time period—and try to integrate some folk-

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SAMPLE LONG RANGE SCHEDULE FOR SECOND-GRADE SOCIAL STUDIES

(First nine weeks only)

UNIT 1—"Who Am I?"*

August 30	Get Acquainted; Self-collage
September 1	"
September 3	"
September 6	Labor Day; no school
September 8	"Who Are You?"
September 10	"
September 13	"How Am I Unique?"
September 15	"
September 17	"
September 20	"My Voice"
September 22	"My Feelings"
September 24	"
September 27	"I Look . . ."
September 29	"
October 1	"I Am . . ."
October 4	"
October 6	"Sanford's Story"
October 8	"
October 11	"
October 13	"My Needs"
October 15	"Safety"
October 18	"Believe"
October 20	"
October 22	"Columbus Day"**
October 25	"Love"
October 27	"Know"
October 29	"Halloween"**

*Nine weeks; 24 teaching days in unit—
Monday, Wednesday, Friday

** Will study Columbus and Halloween rather than
topic from unit

tales into social studies lessons during this period as well.

- ▶ To the extent possible, make rough schedules conform to the school calendar. Take grading periods, holidays, and inservice days into consideration.
- ▶ Knowing what children have studied in each curricular area in the previous grade should help you determine how much time to spend on units/topics and possibly even how to teach children. Therefore, examine the curriculum for the previous grade to see how it might affect your long-range schedule.
- ▶ Be careful not to "overschedule" yourself. Leave some time for review near the end of each unit or chapter, for re-instruction in case skills aren't mastered the first time, and for any unexpected occurrences, such as school closings due to inclement weather.

DAYS 17-15

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS II

1 For each major curricular topic in your rough plans, start an ongoing list of related supplementary materials/activities, such as:

- ▶ Field trips
- ▶ Resource people
- ▶ Media
- ▶ Games
- ▶ Assignments



- ▶ Bulletin boards
- ▶ Learning centers
- ▶ Books for children

Note: Refer to the community resources you uncovered during Days 45–43 and the supplementary materials you gathered during Days 34–33, but do not restrict yourself to these.

2 Learn what library or media-center resources, such as films and cassette tapes, are available to serve your instructional needs during the first few weeks of school. Order and reserve a variety of materials.

3 Prepare any other supplementary materials that you would like to use during the first few weeks of school.

Note: You may want to delay this activity until Days 10–9 when you finalize daily lesson plans.

DAYS 14–12

SKELETON PLAN

1 Draw up a set of “skeleton plans” for the first several weeks of school that includes all of the curricular areas listed in your yearly schedules. Include more details than in your yearly schedules, but fewer than needed for lesson plans. On the next two pages, is a sample five-week skeleton plan for a three-group reading arrangement.

SAMPLE SKELETON PLAN FOR READING INSTRUCTION

WEEK 1

Text Stories: "The Big Day"
"Baby in Clock"
Old Favorite: *The Bus Ride* by J. Wager
Workbook: pp. 32-36
Skills Lessons: Sequence, direction
Activities: Pantomime "TBD."
Make own maps.

Text Story: "Patsy & the C.B."
Old Favorite: *Fire! Fire! Said Mrs. McGuire* by Bill Martin
Workbook pp. 37-38
Skills Lessons: Root Words
Activities: Write an emergency story.
Make a trucker's dictionary.

WEEK 2

Text Stories: "Amy's Family"
"Children's Garden"
Old Favorite: *The Rose in My Garden*
by Arnold Lobel
Workbook: pp. 39-44
Skills Lessons: Realism/fantasy
Activity: Plant bean seeds.

SKELETON PLAN (continued)

- Text Story: "Mandy's Grandmother"
Old Favorite: *Just Grandma and Me* by Mercer Mayer
Workbook: pp. 45–48
Skills Lessons: Context clues
Activity: Make family trees.

WEEK 3

- Text Stories: "Little Boy's Secret"
"The Queen Who Couldn't Bake Gingerbread"
Old Favorite: *The Gingerbread Man* by Jan Sukus.
Workbook: pp. 49–51
Skills Lessons: Prefixes
Activities: Dramatize "LBS."
Bake gingerbread.
- Text Stories: "Which One Is Mine?"
"Paper Animals"
Old Favorite: *Ten Little Animals* by Carl Memling
Workbook: pp. 52–55
Skills Lessons: Glossary, syllabication
Activity: Produce puppet show of "WOIM."
Invent an animal.

Note: A skeleton plan is a brief overview of intended accomplishments. It is not a commitment.

DAY 11

WEEKLY TIME SCHEDULES

CHECK WHEN
COMPLETED ✓

1 Use your skeleton plans to make weekly time schedules for the first few weeks of school.



- ▶ In many cases, schools will provide you with a basic time frame to use as a model. If not, ask another teacher or your principal to help you design one.
- ▶ In your schedules, block off time for all lessons.
- ▶ Also include times for special teachers and activities in areas such as physical education, music, art, and library.
- ▶ Include time for lunch, recesses, and afternoon cleanup.
- ▶ Include regular time, possibly daily, for individual instruction and assistance.
- ▶ If some pupils, such as bus riders, leave before others, mark this time on your schedules and plan activities to do after they leave.
- ▶ Post the first weekly schedule in your classroom.

DAYS 10-9

DAY-TO-DAY PLANS

1 Expand your skeleton plan for the first week of school into daily lesson plans. Keep these pointers in mind:



- ▶ For each lesson plan, specify objectives,

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necessary preparation, important background information, introductory strategies, group and/or individual activities, points for discussion, and resources.

- ▶ You may wish to consider keeping instruction rather traditional until you are confident you have established adequate pupil control.
- ▶ Keep all lessons within the set time limits of your weekly time schedule.
- ▶ Plan a brief additional correlated activity for each area in case a lesson takes less time than planned.

DAYS 8-6

TENTATIVE PUPIL ASSESSMENT

1 Prepare some procedures to help you tentatively estimate pupils' current levels in major subject areas. Assessment procedures might include:

- ▶ Pre-tests
- ▶ Review lessons
- ▶ Worksheets
- ▶ Oral activities
- ▶ Observation checklists

2 Using the rosters you made on Day 27, prepare simple charts on which you can tabulate results of your assessment exercises. On the next page, is an example of a very basic spelling assessment chart.

3 Compare your assessment data, with information in students' cumulative



	Spelling Assessment		
	Top 1/3	Middle 1/3	Low 1/3
Andrea		✓	
Bryan	✓		
Cathy			✓

record folders. Consider discussing any major discrepancies or questions with other teachers. Begin thinking how you can make use of this information in constructing lesson plans, assignments, and instructional groups.

DAYS 5-3

BACKUP MATERIALS

1 Prepare some activities to use when plans don't take as long as expected, when the weather is too severe and a change of plans is necessary, when the music teacher is three minutes late, when children finish early, or at the end of the day. Place descriptions of these activities and related materials in a card file, folder, or small box. Some types of activities that you might want to include are these:

- ▶ Puzzles
- ▶ Seatwork pages
- ▶ Educational games
- ▶ Fingerplays (K-1)
- ▶ Choral readings

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- ▶ Crossword puzzles
- ▶ Discussion questions
- ▶ Creative writing
- ▶ Stories and poems to read aloud
- ▶ Fun art activities
- ▶ Riddles
- ▶ Word searches
- ▶ Brain stretchers

DAY 2

FOLDER FOR SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS

- 1** Start a folder for substitute teachers. ☐
Include at least the following:
 - ▶ Several appropriate activity sheets that could be reproduced quickly and used for seatwork
 - ▶ Standard daily schedule, including the names of special teachers (art, music, physical education, library, and so on)
 - ▶ Names of pupils who leave room to go to special classes (e.g., learning disabilities classes, instrumental music, speech therapy) and when they should leave and return
 - ▶ Seating chart or class roster with comments about pupils with special needs

Note: You may not be able to obtain all the information you need to complete this folder before school starts. Do what you can.

DAY 1

FINAL CHECK!

CHECK WHEN
COMPLETED ✓

- 1** Your name, class level, and room number are posted outside the classroom.
- 2** Name tags are affixed to desks, or materials are set up for students to make their own name tags.
- 3** Your name and the date of the first day of school are written on the chalkboard.
- 4** Room displays are colorful and welcoming.
- 5** You have enough books and school supplies for every student.
- 6** There are extra chairs in the room in case late transfer students arrive.
- 7** You have read your administrative manual and are familiar with district and school rules, procedures, and policies.
- 8** Your lesson plans for the first week of school are on your desk.
- 9** A complete class roster is on your desk.
- 10** All teaching materials for the first day's lessons are ready for use.

HAVE A GREAT YEAR!

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