



Here They Come: The First Day of School

The bell rings and here they come. The first students of your first class of your first day of your first school year in your new (and possibly first) teaching assignment. Getting ready for the first day of school actually begins the day you sign your contract or, perhaps, even earlier when you began researching districts and school where you wanted to work. Many activities can make for a successful first day and proper planning and preparation will ensure you show up on time ready to go, ready to teach.

Here are some tips to ensure a calm, composed, and confident first day of teaching. So, ***READY, SET, GO!***

JOIN and support your TSTA local affiliate. Your local education association can be a great source of moral support from people who understand the difficulty of your job and who can provide you with assistance during the coming year and your teaching career. If you meet other new teachers who haven't joined, invite them to. There's power in numbers!

Get organized. Start off the year by getting your personal and personnel papers organized. You never know when you may have to produce a document related to your job. Your certification,

appraisal scores, and professional development records are very important. Set up a good record keeping system.

Get beyond the first thirty minutes. The first rule of teaching is to plan for everything. Teachers plan for instruction, classroom management, and discipline. They plan routines and procedures and they plan for emergencies, urgencies, and, to the extent that can, the unknown. Your primary responsibility is to provide a safe environment for your students to learn. When it comes to lesson planning, develop

enough lesson plans to at least make it through the first week. You can always adapt and adjust if you run out of time but you absolutely do not want to be scrambling on the first day for things to do in your classroom.

Explore the school. Before school begins, take time to walk around the school and the campus. Make sure you know where the office, the clinic, the library and the cafeteria are. Visit the custodian's office to make sure you know where it is and what he or she has in the event a student gets sick. Also, take time to find and visit with your **TSTA** Campus Representative. This person should be your "go to" person on your campus for questions needing answered and issues seeking resolution.

Experience the campus. Plan to arrive at school on your first day as early as possible to experience the kids arriving at school. Likewise, stay late and watch the students as they leave school for home. Notice any of your students who stay late after school. Being on campus from beginning to end allows you to feel the "vibe" of the campus. It also helps you notice when your colleagues and other staff arrive.

Arrive on time the first day and every day. Before the first day of school, get up and get out. Drive from where you live to your school during the time you would do so during the school year. You will want to know how long it takes during rush hour traffic to get from home to work in time to be ready to teach. Identify alternate routes in the event of unforeseen traffic jams such as accidents, stalled vehicles, or construction.

Plug in Phone Numbers. Enter critical phone numbers into our cell phone in the event of an emergency. This includes the school phone number, the number of a colleague or department head and the administrator you report to. In the event you cannot make it to work or even running late, you want to make sure you contact the right person.

Make procedural decisions. School will begin much more smoothly if you decide in advance

Avoid being "labeled" as a new teacher on your first day!

Some students report they can easily identify first-year teachers because they are: inconsistent, lenient, nervous, slow to handle discipline problems, and they try to be your friend.

Preparation is the key to a successful first year of teaching. An effective teacher is a confident teacher, and confidence comes from preparation.

how to handle routines and procedures. It is especially important for you to develop classroom discipline procedures that follow your district's policy, Student Code of Conduct and guidelines. Elementary teachers should decide on systems for: taking attendance, book and paper distribution, money collection, restroom visits, fire drills, classroom entrances and exits, and bus loading. Secondary teachers need to decide how to: take attendance, deal with tardy students, make assignments, collect papers, handle makeup work, and give hall passes.

Keep tax records. During the year, you may have expenditures that could be deductions on your income tax returns. Now is the time to set aside a place for keeping tax records and start keeping track of them.

Build relationships. Get to know the school secretary and the custodians. Meet the teachers on your hall. They can be really helpful in the first few weeks of school. And take the time to say "hello" to other important people in your building: the librarians, the counselors, the school nurses, and the cafeteria workers. If your school has a designated person to make copies, get to know that person and find out what you need to do to make their job (and yours) easier.

Find a shoulder. Every teacher needs a colleague to turn to for special advice. If you don't have a "buddy," find one, or reach out and be a buddy to someone else.

If you have friends in college who want to be a teacher, they can join our **TSTA Student Program** by clicking [here](#).

If you know someone who has just retired as an educator, encourage them to join **TSTA-Retired** by clicking [here](#). Use the dropdown menu to select Retired or Pre-Retired.

GREAT READS from the [NEA Professional Library](#)

Meeting the Challenge: Special Education Tools that Work for All Kids

This book gives busy educators the tools they need to teach a classroom of students with various skill levels and special needs. General and special educators can find effective strategies to help students struggling to overcome academic or behavior difficulties. Recently revised, this toolkit is filled with useful ideas and practical, timesaving strategies, as well as sample checklists, rubrics, conference planning sheets and other resources teachers can copy and use or modify to make their own. Available for \$15.95.

The Nitty-Gritty Classroom and Behavior Management Resource

This comprehensive resource offers practical teacher techniques, solutions and tips on classroom and behavior management topics. Regardless of experience level, this book helps teachers better relate to, understand and love their job. The Nitty-Gritty offers innovative ideas, visuals, and reproducible materials. Available for \$22.95.

The Discipline Checklist: Advice from 60 Successful Teachers

How would you like to be able to consult with dozens for your colleagues without getting up from your desk? Sixty elementary teachers—each recognized for highly successful efforts at maintaining discipline—share their secrets of classroom management and suggestions for motivating today's students. Practical and easy to read, this checklist will help you be better prepared for beginning the school year; coach you on modeling positive interactions; and remind you of the importance of maintaining flexibility in your discipline strategies. Available for \$4.50.