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THE FIRST FEW DAYS

Most teachers do not sleep well the night before school begins in September! This could come as a surprise to most students. It applies to teachers with many years experience, but is probably worse for new teachers. Don't worry! In a couple of weeks you'll be so tired you'll have very little difficulty in falling asleep.

Here are a few ideas to make the first day less stressful.

1. Have your classroom ready with the furniture arranged in a way that meets your needs for the first few weeks. You can make changes later.
2. Assign places by putting name tags on each desk. I always did this in alphabetical order. If you have assigned places, it stops the mad dash for the seats at the back! You can always move someone if it becomes necessary. Leave one or two spare desks if possible. You may have students who have not registered at the school assigned to your room.
3. Put your name on the blackboard and introduce yourself. Smile!! The days of no smiling in September are long gone!
4. Give the students the information form on page 29, and ask them to fill it in.
5. Many schools do not have Opening Exercises at the regular time on the first day, so be prepared for some delays. You could hand out a simple math review sheet which will occupy the students and give you a chance to see how much they remember. Stress that this is just a review to avoid nervous students becoming unduly stressed.
6. Check that all the students assigned to you are in the room. Most schools want this done quickly and the numbers sent to the office as soon as possible. Other students often know if someone is sick or has moved.
7. It is unlikely that you will be able to begin your regular classroom schedule the first day of school. The first few days can be spent setting up routines, reviewing school procedures and discussing classroom rules and expectations.

Little Things That Make Life Easier

1. Always keep a few extra pens and pencils in a place where students can borrow them. This will stop them from interrupting you if they need one. If they disappear and are not returned, put some slips of paper nearby, so that the students can put their names in the box.
2. Use student monitors whenever possible. This fosters a sense of responsibility among the students, and allows you to be doing something more important.
3. Put numbers inside all text books that are given to the students. Keep a list of the numbers so that the book can be returned if it is misplaced.
4. Keep a list of student addresses and telephone numbers at home. It is often difficult to contact a parent during the day and calling from home is often more convenient.
5. Set up a "Buddy " system with another class. This is best done by pairing younger students with older ones. The older students can read to the younger ones and help them in many ways. The older students gain a sense of achievement in doing this.
6. If you have to teach a subject that is not familiar to you, like music or physical education, check to see if you can arrange to exchange with another teacher. Make sure that this is acceptable with your principal.
7. Set up a folder for substitute teachers.
More suggestions about this are found on page 25
8. Read to your class, regardless of their grade level. This will sharpen their listening skills and give you the opportunity to introduce students to books they might not choose to read themselves.
This is a good activity to start the afternoon, as it settles the class down.
9. Keep a current class list near you fire exit door. You can pick it up as you leave the classroom.
10. Students do not always volunteer to go first for presentation, etc. Here is an easy way to avoid problems with this. Assign each student a number: the number on the register works well. Put each number on a 1" square of bristol