

## The First 15 Days of School

The first 15 days of class will set the tone for how the rest of the school year will play out. It is important for teachers to make a welcoming first impression so that their students feel comfortable and excited to come to class every day. Greeting the students at the door is a great way to start the class. This one-on-one attention can build trust with the students and gain the student's respect. Personally learning all the students' names also creates a welcoming environment because the teacher reveals that he/she has taken the time to get to know each and every student.

Having a daily routine also helps the students ease into the school year. Time saving routines can minimize down time and also help with behavioral issues. Training the students to walk in and pick up papers can help save the teacher time so he/she does not waste time passing them out. Once the bell rings, the teacher should start the "Engage" part of the lesson. During this time when the students are working, the teacher can take attendance so that the students are not waiting on the teacher to start exploring.

Setting up clear expectations and guidelines the first few days can eliminate confusion and behavior issues later down the road. Allowing the students to come up with their own classroom rules allows them to be in control of their own classroom and helps justify affirmative actions when they are needed because the students themselves came up the rules.

Setting up the classroom is also important to think about the first 15 days of school. Having the students sit in small groups can encourage collaborative thinking and inquiry based learning. Students learn best from each other so cooperative strategies such as Think-Pair-Share and Gallery Walks between groups are very beneficial. Students are listening and then re-explaining/teaching their peers which sits at the top of Bloom's Taxonomy's Pyramid, allowing for maximum content retention.

Every unique learner in a classroom needs to be addressed; for example: ELL, 504, and special needs students need to be identified and accommodated as soon as possible. ELL students benefit by having mathematics vocabulary word banks as well as sentence stems for them to substitute in the correct vocab. Therefore it is important to incorporate these methods into lesson plans before school starts in case an ELL student is placed in the class. Visuals are also a key tool for ELL students because the student can *see* what is happening and think about it in his/her natural language so that it makes sense. Keeping a folder for each class period with the students' specific needs/accommodations can help teachers organize the requirements to make sure each requirement is fulfilled.

Assessing the students is key to successful future lessons. Students need to have a solid groundwork of prior material. Trying to teach new material on day one without assessing may cause students to start building on unstable understanding of previous concepts, therefore hindering the students' ability to learn new material. Having students solve white board review questions and requiring exit-slips the first few days allows the teacher to see where the misconceptions are so that he/she can fix them up front and make sure everyone is on the same page.

Grading is also important to go over so that students understand what is expected of them. Having a separate completed work bin for each class period can help organize the different class periods' work and also give the students the responsibility for turning in their assignments on time and in the right bin. At the end of each day, the bins can be emptied into separate folders for the teacher to take home and grade.

When grades become an issue, parents need to be contacted. Having the parents complete "homework" the first day can help this process later down the road. Each student takes home an assignment for their parent stating they must reply via email, text, or written note to the teacher with their name, son/daughters name, and any other comments about their child. Having the parents communicate directly to the teacher automatically gives the teacher their contact information and makes the first introduction between parent and teacher.