



Unit 1

Your Induction Into Teaching

Chapter 1

How Does Teaching Differ from Student Teaching?

Chapter 2

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Chapter 3

What Are Some Challenges for the Reflective Teacher?

Chapter 4

How Can I Plan Ahead for My First Day?

Unit 1

Your Induction Into Teaching

*All the resources
we need are in
the mind.*

Theodore Roosevelt



Chapter 4

How Can I Plan Ahead for My First Day?



Effectiveness Essentials

- Mental planning and detailed plans in black and white are key to success.
- Gather teacher's editions, planning documents, and supplies.
- Reach out to your students and parents.
- Familiarize yourself with your district, school, and its community.

Plan Ahead for Success

The two keys to success in teaching are mental planning and detailed written plans. The minute you secure your teaching position is not too soon to begin preplanning for your first year and first day of teaching. Before school starts, you have an opportunity to plan the year ahead by visualizing yourself at work in your classroom and then writing down on paper those ideas and tasks that need to be accomplished before the first day. You will probably revise your drafts, so keep them in a loose-leaf binder.

Apply It!

Ask at least three veteran teachers how they prepare for the first day of school. Every teacher, new and experienced, can always use some fresh ideas. Make a list of relevant, useful, and constructive advice and keep adding to the list as you pick up more tips along the way. The ongoing list will serve as a reminder of tasks still to be done.



NOTES

Ways to Prepare For the First Day

Somehow, “firsts” seem magical: first date, first prom, first baby, first house. These moments are etched into memory. But the reality is that the first day of school is like any other, and if you are well prepared, the day will pass very quickly, and you will be on to the second!

Gather resources.

These are some resources to help with preparations:

- **Success-of-the-Day Journal.** Buy yourself a blank journal, and then write the date and three successes of each school day (see Figure 4.1). It might be that your class responded favorably to your poetry lesson. Perhaps your principal gave you a much valued compliment or a colleague told you how well behaved your students were. Or, a parent may have commented on how much his child looks forward to coming to school each day.

**Figure 4.1**Success-of-the-Day
Journal Entry

This will become your reflective journal, and initially you are only allowed to write down your successes. Later, you can add suggestions for improvement as you reflect on your day. As you reread the journal at the end of each week, you will see written proof that you know what you are doing.

- **A Day Planner/Calendar or Electronic Organizer.** You probably used some sort of calendar, date book, or electronic organizer to keep track of appointments, exams, and work during your college years. Now you need to think about a planner in which you can list open house dates, parent conferences, inservice seminars, faculty meetings, and other school events.
- **Just-in-Case Kit.** Keep a personal “just-in-case kit” in your desk with items such as a change of socks or hose, a toothbrush and toothpaste, sewing kit, band-aids, pain relievers, deodorant, cologne, breath mints, etc.

If you teach a “messy” subject like art or chemistry or teach early grades, you may want a change of shirt or blouse in case of accidental spills. Or, keep an oversized shirt around that you can wear in those “messy” situations. You may want to keep an extra sweater and an umbrella in your classroom and a few snack bars in case your lunch is interrupted. Pretend you are delayed at school for an evening meeting or during an emergency. What would you need to get through that day? Think of this as your school emergency/teacher survival kit.

- **Autobiographical Bulletin Board.** Gather materials for an autobiographical bulletin board. You might include a report card from your own school days; photos of family, pets, and travels; a list of favorite books; special quotes; certificates you have earned; your teaching philosophy, and anything else you want to share with your students. This board will serve as a



Introducing Your Teacher

visual when you introduce yourself to your class on the first day of school.

Reach out to your students and their parents before school starts.

Here are some ideas:

- **Parent and Student Letters.**

Compose a parent letter that will go home on the first day of school. You can make templates for the rules, policies, newsletters, and open house schedule way before school starts. You can send a postcard, or a letter, to parents or to your students expressing your anticipation of the new school year (see Figure 4.2).

- **One-on-One Visits.** One teacher I know makes home visits or tele-

phones parents at the start of the school year. Although this is unusual in this day and age, you can imagine how impressed a parent would be at your level of commitment.

Take the time to get to know your school and the surrounding community if you are unfamiliar with it.

- **Attend a School Board meeting.**


You can even introduce yourself informally as a new teacher to the board members. They will be impressed that you took the time to attend.

- **Visit your school.** Take some time to visit or revisit your school site. This will enable you to find the school and see how long the commute takes. Try

Teacher Talks . . .

Call parents the first week of school. Let them know something great you have observed about their child. This will start the year off on a positive note, and if you have to call about some problem later, you will have already established a good relationship.

*Linda Meyer,
Resource Teacher
San Bernardino, CA*


 Teacher Talks . . .

During your work days before school begins, seek out other teachers and take the initiative to introduce yourself. You will need the support that they have to offer, and they will appreciate your support as well.

Becky Monroe
Language Arts and Reading, Grades 7–9
San Bernardino, CA

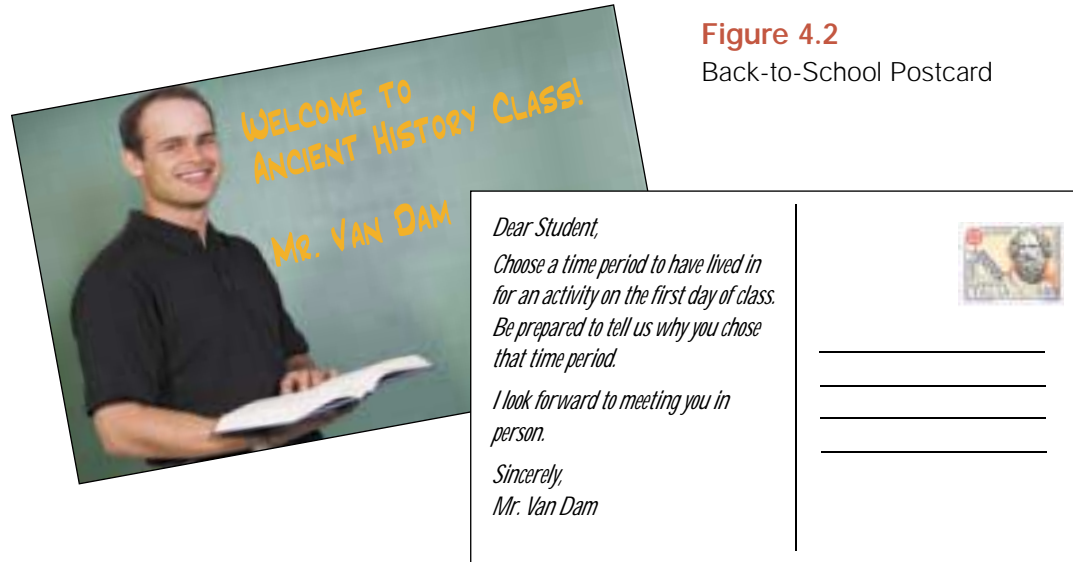


Figure 4.2
Back-to-School Postcard

out your route to school during the times you will be traveling back and forth to see what traffic is like or how to time your arrival by rapid transit. In addition, visiting the site early will help you feel more comfortable in your new surroundings. Find out how to get your own school e-mail address.

- **Get to know your community.** Many teachers will relocate to a new state, city, or region. Settle down as soon as possible so you can get a feel for the community and learn where best to make friends. Check out key locations in town like the public library, and meet key people, including the movers and shakers. Making friends in and out of school will give you a sense of belonging. Investigate community organizations and other activities that might interest you and enable you to connect with others.
- **Surf the School and District Websites.** You will find a great deal of information here that you will need to know, such as test scores, school policies and procedures, etc. Ask about any procedures that are unclear. Learn the reasons for any policies that don't seem to make sense. Every school has its own history and challenges. You'll be better equipped to follow policies and procedures correctly if you understand the reasoning behind them.
- **Read the Community Phone Directory and Local Newspaper.** You will glean a great deal of information about an unfamiliar community by reading these sources of

Apply It!

Become an architect. Take a piece of graph paper and decide what furniture arrangement best reflects your instructional and management goals. Is your designated space a science or technology lab? In your history classes, do you want your students facing one another across a divided room? Will you be using PowerPoint as a primary instructional tool, and do you want all students facing the screen? Will you be using cooperative learning strategies? Do you need areas for small-group instruction and differentiated learning? Does your plan encourage or discourage interaction? Planning your room out on paper will save you time when you actually get into your classroom to move furniture. Create alternative plans just in case one doesn't work out.

good information. Learn the history of the town and read the local newspaper to find out what the local issues are. What are the unique features of the community? What are the after-school opportunities you can refer parents to? What special services are offered to families? How can you connect with other people?

Make your classroom a space you look forward to coming to.

You will spend more hours at school in your classroom than you will at home from Monday to Friday. If you are sharing a room, you need to meet with your “roommates,” negotiate some private desk and bulletin board space, and discuss sharing computers, file cabinets, storage cabinets, and technology such as the LCD or overhead projector. Buy a rolling cart to take with you as you move from room to room with materials that cannot be stored in the shared classroom.

Gather materials and supplies for your students.

Teacher supplies you may need include: a plan book, journal, pens and markers, a stapler and staples, paper clips, tape, rubber bands, a seating chart, subject-specific materials, substitute teacher folder, and substitute goodie bag. This last item should be packed with new and different materials that pertain to your subject or subjects and supplement the plans you have prepared in advance. It might include

Teacher Talks . . .

I went out and spent \$1700.00 dollars on supplies and posters for my room. What I did not take into consideration was that the students did not want to see posters. They wanted to see their own work up. I did not need to spend all that money. . . . Another thing that I did not realize was that other teachers would be more than happy to share what they already had with me. The thing that I should have been working on was where to put all the things that I wanted up. Space is very limited in a classroom. . . . After the first quarter, I'm a little more choosy about what and where I put things up.

*Cheryl Ayala
Fifth Grade First-Year Teacher
San Bernardino, California*

Teacher Talks . . .

I teach English to second, fourth and sixth graders at Escuela Concepcion in Costa Rica. Only the sixth graders have four thin, photocopied textbooks. There are no textbooks for students in the other elementary grades. Teachers get one piece of chalk per day. This is back to basics teaching—the students, a blackboard, and me.

*Dr. Gary Negin
Volunteer Teacher in Costa Rica*

a History Channel video for your American History class, play scripts for an English class, an edible experiment for a middle school science class, or special arts or crafts projects and one-minute mysteries for elementary students.

Stock up on student supplies at discount or warehouse-type stores. A recent *Los Angeles Times* article (Hayasaki, 2004) reported that teachers commonly dip into their own pockets for supplies, and one profiled teacher spends as much as \$2,000 of her \$48,000 salary. A science teacher was quoted as spending \$3,000 on special equipment and supplies. First, check out what the school provides and then, depending on the grade level of your students, you may need to supplement these supplies with some that

Avoid It!

Being in denial about what lies ahead

Waiting until school starts to prepare yourself

Winging it



Visit your school supply room early.

you provide. **YOU DO NOT NEED TO BUY WHEN FREE IS BETTER.** There are suggestions for securing free and inexpensive materials in Chapter 23.

Get a copy of the teacher's editions of your textbooks early.

This is the best way you can adequately prepare your curriculum. Many teacher materials can be complex. So you will need time before school begins to get the big picture of all you are expected to teach that first year. This will also give you time to think of additional strategies or activities you can use in your lessons.



Unit 1 Checklist

Preplanning for First Day Checklist

For more information go to Chapter:

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|--------------------------|---|-----------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Have I read all the state and district standards? | Chapters 3, 21 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Have I read school and district procedures and policies? | Chapter 4, 9 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Do I have an overview of the year's curriculum, including texts? | Chapters 21, 23 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Have I designed my classroom environment? | Chapter 10 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Do I have a discipline plan consistent with the district/school? | Chapter 9 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Have I familiarized myself with the school and community? | Chapter 4 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Do I have a plan for reaching out to students and families? | Chapters 4, 9 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Have I gathered teaching resources, including planning materials? | Chapters 4, 23 |

Further Reading: Books About the First-Year Teaching Experience

Baldacci, L. (2003). *Inside Mrs. B's classroom: Courage, hope and learning on Chicago's South side*. New York: McGraw Hill. A journalist gives up her job to teach middle school in an urban school that is overwhelmed by problems. This is a realistic view of teaching in the inner city by a teacher who faced all of the challenges head-on and eventually triumphed.

Goodnough, A. (2004). *Mrs. Moffett's first year: Becoming a teacher in America*. New York: PublicAffairs. This is an account of a legal secretary turned teaching fellow in a pilot program in New York City. She signs on as first grade teacher in an underperforming school in Brooklyn.

Kane, P., Ed. (1996). *My first year as a teacher*. New York: Signet. This is a collection of 25 first-year teacher accounts spanning all grade levels and all kinds of classrooms.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2001). *Crossing over to Canaan: The journey of new teachers in diverse classrooms*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. This is an account of the challenges and rewards of teaching diverse learners in real-life situations.

Reed, K. (1999). *Rookie year: Journey of a first-year teacher*. Boston, MA: Peralta Publishing. A first-year teacher recounts the personal and professional challenges in his first year of teaching a fifth grade class, known as "The Wild Bunch," in a Boston school.

First-Year Teacher Websites

Advice for First-Year Teachers

http://www.educationworld.com/a_curr/curr152.shtml

This website is geared to the needs of first-year teachers and includes survival guides, tips, resources, and links to other first-year teacher sites.

Middle Web: The First Days of Middle School

<http://www.middleweb.com/1stDResources.html>

This website is geared to the middle school teacher, but has ideas relevant for high school as well. There is multitude of short articles about discipline, icebreakers, connecting with parents, successful first-year and first-day advice, etc.

National Education Association

<http://www.nea.org>

This comprehensive website for educators features ideas, archives of research articles, education statistics, and links to classroom ideas.

New Teacher Resources

<http://www.teachersfirst.com/new-tch.shtml>

This website will be especially helpful to secondary teachers and includes topics such as the first day of middle school and do's and don'ts for success in middle school along with many other useful resources with links to the U.S. Department of Education publications for new teachers.

What to Expect Your First Year of Teaching

<http://www.ed.gov/pubs/FirstYear/>

This website offers advice and strategies from first-year teachers and veterans and includes a checklist of tips.