



Getting Off to a Good Start

The beginning of school is a critical time for classroom management because your students will learn attitudes, behavior, and work habits that will affect the tone of your class for the rest of the year. It is in the first few weeks of school that students learn the behaviors expected of them and how to accomplish school tasks successfully. They also learn in what ways these tasks are meaningful to them and why success is worth pursuing. Much of this meaning is communicated simply by how you treat your students and what you expect of them from the very first day. Careful planning for the beginning of school sets the stage for the rest of the year.

Your major goal for the beginning of the year, then, is to strengthen each student's belief that school tasks are worth doing and that he or she can be successful. One key way to meet this goal is to build productive relationships with students (see Chapter 2). In addition, you must obtain student cooperation in two key areas: following your rules and procedures and engaging successfully in all learning experiences. Attaining this goal will make it possible for you to create a positive climate for learning throughout the year.

A concern for establishing appropriate behavior does not imply a lack of concern for student feelings and attitudes. Instead, the intent is to create a classroom climate that helps children feel secure and confident and keeps preventable problems from occurring. Therefore, some of the suggestions in this chapter focus directly on cognitive goals, whereas others incorporate student concerns and other affective considerations.

The three major topics in this chapter are creating a positive climate, teaching the rules and procedures, and deciding on the classroom activities you will use

during the first week of school. Communicating with parents, special problems, and preparing for a substitute are also discussed. To help organize your planning and give you ideas about how to begin, a checklist and two case studies of the beginning of the year are included.

■ Creating a Positive Climate in Your Classroom

Having a good management plan before the school year begins is essential, but its effectiveness in building community will depend on the presence of a positive classroom environment. Your goal is not to be the ruler of a classroom kingdom, but to be the designer and facilitator of an interactive classroom community. The foundation of a positive climate starts with positive interactions between teacher and students and among students (see Chapter 2). A positive environment encourages students to be excited about learning and their school experience.

Because students are with their teachers almost 50 percent of their waking hours during the school year, it is easy to see how teachers are major influences in young people's lives. This large investment of time, plus teachers' influence on students, requires the creation of a positive and safe environment in which students can be challenged, feel free to explore, support one another, and engage in constructing their own knowledge (see Chapter 9).

Like all human beings, children have a strong need to belong to a group. You can promote that sense of belonging in a number of ways (Erwin, 2003; Pianta, 2006):

1. **Speak courteously and calmly.** Students need to hear teachers say "Please," "Thank you," and "Excuse me." These modeled courtesies become expected and are repeated by the students. A calm voice indicates acceptance and self-control. If students feel threatened or frustrated, knowing that the teacher is not upset is reassuring.
2. **Share information.** Learn each student's name as soon as possible and plan activities that help students learn more about each other. Introduce yourself and share something about your outside interests. Speak personally with your students to get to know them individually.
3. **Speak positively as often as possible.** Often, negative behavior is more noticeable than positive; therefore, teachers tend to comment on it more often. Perhaps teachers also feel compelled to mention negative behavior because we believe it will improve students' behavior. The opposite is usually true. Not only do negative statements cause a student to feel negative but they also tend to create a negative environment that affects everyone.
4. **Establish a feeling of community.** Conduct regular class meetings for community-building, problem solving, and content-related discussions. One of your first meetings can focus on establishing class rules and procedures (see Chapter 4).

Building a positive relationship with individual students is seen as one of the most critical predictors of student success, but understanding the concept of authority is also important to the health of the community. To feel safe, children need to know that there is a source of authority within the classroom (Brophy, 2004; Hoy & Weinstein, 2006). The power of authority naturally lies with the teacher, but how that authority is used has a critical influence on the learning community.

Teacher Authority

Teacher authority refers to your right to set standards for student behavior and performance and to the likelihood that students will follow your lead in making their decisions and behaviors. When students do as you expect, they are vesting you with the authority to lead them. When they intentionally engage in behaviors contrary to your wishes, they are disputing your teacher authority.

Teacher authority can be derived from multiple sources (Pace, 2003; Spady & Mitchell, 1979). Under *traditional* authority, students are expected to behave because the teacher is the adult in charge, much as children are expected to obey their parents. Teachers who rely exclusively on this form of authority will find dealing with upper elementary students problematic when that authority is challenged. *Bureaucratic* authority derives its legitimacy from the teacher's ability to use grades to reward effort and performance, and to use prescribed consequences for desirable and inappropriate behaviors. *Expert* or *professional* authority is based on teacher knowledge and skills: Students may accept the teacher's decisions about curriculum and academic tasks because of the teacher's expertise in the subject matter. Finally, some teachers utilize *charismatic* authority; they are expressive and outgoing, or they engage students with their interactive style and good communication skills. Students follow these teachers' lead because they like and are attracted to them. Pace (2003) found that teachers derived their authority from several sources rather than relying on just one. For example, a *charismatic* teacher might use *bureaucratic* and *traditional* authority with students who don't respond positively to his or her interpersonal style.

Mention of teacher authority can make some persons uncomfortable because the term suggests "authoritarian" and thus evokes an image of repression and arbitrary governance. However, there are several forms of authority, and they are not all repressive. Furthermore, society depends on authority as a key aspect in organizing its social and work groups. In the same way, schools depend on student acceptance of legitimate authority to create a safe setting in which teaching and learning can occur.



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Another perspective on authority makes a distinction between *authoritarian* and *authoritative* leadership. *Authoritarian* teachers mandate rules without rationales, try to control students through threats and punishment, and assign consequences arbitrarily. In contrast, *authoritative* teachers explain the basis for actions and decisions, give students more independence as they demonstrate maturity and a willingness to behave responsibly, and administer consequences fairly and proportionately. Regardless of the style of teacher authority, or combination of styles, authoritarian behavior invites challenges and resistance, whereas authoritative leadership invites cooperation.

You will find it useful to pay attention to how students react to your use of authority and then to consider ways to adjust your approach when necessary. Some students may be less likely to accept your authority if it relies on a different source than they have experienced in the past. For example, children who are used to traditional forms of authority at home and in school may need a long transition period before they will be comfortable with less adult-centered approaches. Students in the upper elementary grades, however, may be equally responsive to expert or professional authority, especially if their family or previous teachers have utilized nontraditional authority sources. You won't be able to turn a specific style of authority on and off, of course, but if you are aware of your tendencies, you can at least anticipate your students' reactions to your leadership and adapt your approach to best effect. It may be comforting to remember that teachers have multiple sources of authority to draw from in their work with students.

It's a useful exercise to pay attention to how students react to your use of authority and then consider ways to adjust your approach when appropriate. No single approach is best in all circumstances, so try to be flexible and open to feedback.

■ Teaching Rules and Procedures

One of the surest ways to communicate your expectations for student behavior is through a planned system of classroom rules and procedures. How best to teach this system to your students is an important consideration. The term *teach* is used purposely; you will not communicate your expectations adequately if you only state the rules and procedures. Here are three important aspects of the teaching process:

1. Describing and demonstrating the desired behavior. Use words and actions to convey what behavior is acceptable or desirable. Be as specific as possible. For

example, do not simply tell students you expect good behavior while you are visiting with a guest; tell them what “good behavior” means—staying in seats, no talking, keep working. Demonstrate desired behavior whenever possible. For example, if you allow “quiet talking” or “classroom voices” during center time, show what this means. If the procedure is complex, present it step by step. For example, lining up requires that students know when to line up (the teacher gives permission by tables or rows), where and how to go (push chairs under tables and then walk without talking), expected behavior in line (hands off others, no talking in halls, walk—don’t run). You do not have to do all of the demonstrating; students enjoy showing the class the correct procedure also.

2. **Rehearsal—Practicing the behavior.** Rehearsal serves two purposes: It helps students learn the appropriate behavior and it provides you with an opportunity to determine whether the students understand and can follow a procedure correctly. Complex procedures may have to be rehearsed several times. Practice is especially helpful for primary-grade children; however, older elementary school students can also benefit from rehearsal when procedures are complex, unfamiliar, or have not been utilized recently (e.g., after a break).
3. **Feedback.** After you have asked students to follow a procedure for the first time, tell them whether they did it properly. If they need to improve, tell them that, too. Be specific in your feedback—for example, “Thank you for putting your materials away quickly. Please stop the talking at Table 2.” If many students do not follow a procedure correctly, repeat one or more of the steps listed here. If only a few students are off track, ask them to describe what they are supposed to do so that you can see whether they have understood your directions. Finally, the fact that students follow the procedure correctly once does not mean they will do so consistently. Watch carefully, and be prepared to give reminders and feedback as appropriate.

The following example illustrates teaching procedures; it shows how a complex transition procedure was taught to a second-grade class.

Ms. Stevens explains to her students that she expects them to move quickly and quietly from one activity to another so they will have time to do all the things planned. She shows them the kitchen timer and makes it ring. When they hear this bell, they should put away the materials they are using and move to the next activity as quickly as possible. She says, “After reading, I will ring the bell, and you are to put your reading materials in your desk as quickly as possible. Then get up from your desk and walk to the rug without talking so we can begin our Spanish lesson. Are there any questions?” A student asks if she will always ring the bell for Spanish, and Ms. Stevens says she will.

Ms. Stevens next tells the class that she would like them to practice. “You have paper and pencil on your desk for story writing. I will give you time to finish the story later in the day. Right now, when I ring the bell, put your materials in your desk, and come quickly and quietly to the rug.” At this point, Ms. Stevens rings the bell. Students immediately begin putting away their materials and moving toward the rug. However, several students line up to get drinks of water, and

one goes to the restroom. When everyone is on the rug circling Ms. Stevens, she refers to the clock on the wall and says, “It took us 3 minutes to put the materials away and get to the rug. You are second-graders now, and I think you can move faster than that. I think you should be seated on the rug in a circle in 1 minute. Also, it was not time to get a drink of water or to use the restroom unless it was an emergency. Do you all understand?” The students all nod solemnly.

Ms. Stevens tells students to return to their desks, get out their paper and pencils, and prepare to practice again. The students go quickly back to their desks and take out their materials. Ms. Stevens rings the bell again, and students go through the routine, this time more quickly. After everyone is settled, Ms. Stevens smiles and thanks the students. “You’ve done a super job. It took you only 1 minute to get to the rug. I’m really proud of you.”

Pause and Consider

Discuss with a partner your responses to the following questions:

1. What procedure did Mrs. Stevens teach?
2. What steps did Ms. Stevens use to teach it?
3. What feedback was offered as students practiced?
4. What will Ms. Stevens likely have to do for the next several transitions?
5. How has Ms. Stevens utilized her authority?

■ Planning for a Good Beginning

Planning for a warm and friendly learning environment for your students is a positive first step in starting the year. In the beginning, you must consider the management strategies of building productive relationships, setting up the physical classroom environment, choosing teaching rules and procedures, and developing a system for ensuring student accountability and for managing student work (discussed in Chapters 2, 3, 4, and 5). You now need to plan activities for the first several days of school.

Planning for the First Days of School

Planning activities that will allow all your students to be successful will make them feel more secure and confident and will encourage good effort. Initial assignments should be easy and require only simple directions. In this way, students can learn lesson routines quickly and encounter less difficulty in completing assignments.

For the first few days, limit your lessons to those that can be presented and explained to all students at the same time. If possible, avoid individual testing activities or assignments that require lengthy work with individual students and that might keep you from monitoring the whole class. If you are involved with a small

group or with an individual, you may not see important behaviors and events that can later grow into problems. For example, don't overload yourself or your students with unnecessarily complicated activities. Your students will already be learning many new procedures during the first few days of school.

Plan activities to take into account the students' perspectives, concerns, and need for information about their new and unfamiliar classroom. A variety of activities—including some with physical movement, music, and provision for occasional short breaks—provides the changes of pace that help maintain interest and alertness throughout the day. In addition, you can stimulate excitement in the curriculum and its activities if you foreshadow interesting things the students will be learning this year.

Keep in mind that not all your students may be present the first day of school. Many times, students will enter or leave school during the first couple of weeks. For record-keeping purposes, create a temporary grade book and attendance sheet that you can transfer to your official records once your class roster is settled.

Some Typical Activities

Activities for the first school day and for several days thereafter are not necessarily presented here in the sequence you will follow, nor will you use each activity every day. Examine the two case studies at the end of the chapter to see how different teachers put the pieces together.

Greeting the Students. Prepare name tags ahead of time, but have extra materials on hand for those students who are not on your class list. Decide how name tags will be worn. If you intend to use safety pins, be sure your students can fasten them, or plan to do it for them. Other options are tape, commercial stick-on tags, or a length of yarn so the name tags are worn around the neck. In addition to name tags, you might tape a name card to the top of each student's desk.

When students enter the room, greet them warmly, help them get their name tags, and get them seated. If you have taped their names to their desks, the matter of seating is settled. The roster of students is often not definite, so you may have them find a desk that “fits” them so that they will be comfortable throughout the year. Explain that seating may change later.

Make a seating chart or label desks as soon as practicable, making any necessary adjustments later. Some teachers use a grid, putting student names into the boxes in pencil until classes have stabilized and seating is set. Another strategy involves using sticky notes on a heavy sheet of $8\frac{1}{2} \times 11$ -inch paper and keeping it in a plastic sleeve. This allows you to move, add, or subtract students as necessary. If you decide to rearrange desks, sticky notes can be arranged in any configuration. In addition, you can color-code individual notes to inform a substitute of information about students' needs, allergies, and/or issues. A number of free online tools are available (e.g., www.superteachertools.net/instantclassroom/seating-chart-maker.php).

Don't allow students to wander around the room or become noisy. As students enter, provide a simple puzzle, a bulletin board-themed coloring/activity sheet,

or a piece of paper with open-ended questions such as “I am thinking about . . .,” “I have a question about . . .,” or “I wonder what _____ is like in school” to give them something to do at their desks. As soon as most students are present, begin with the introduction. Remember later in the day to let them talk about how they solved the puzzles or what they wrote on their papers.

Introductions. You will want to tell students something about yourself; however, an extended autobiography is not necessary. A few personal notes and something about your interests are appropriate. Have students introduce themselves—often nothing more than a name is necessary, but some teachers have students tell something about themselves (e.g., favorite hobby, naming family members). The introductory activity should not take too long, and you do not want your class to become restless. Plan an opportunity later to get more acquainted.

Room Description. Introduce students to their classroom by pointing out and describing areas of the room, especially areas that they will be using on the first day (e.g., where they may put their coats, lunches, or other items from home). Particularly for kindergarten, plan also to do a school tour (e.g., library, cafeteria).

Get-Acquainted Activities. Teachers frequently include a get-acquainted activity as part of their first-day plan. Such activities can help students feel that the teacher and others know them better and care about them as individuals. Teachers often describe the goal of such an activity as helping students feel more secure and comfortable with their classmates. The activities are also used to foster a greater sense of class cohesiveness. One of the following get-acquainted activities can be used early in the first day for a change of pace after the room description or after the initial discussion of rules and major procedures:

- Have pairs of students learn each other’s names and something about the other person (e.g., hobbies, interests). Then have students introduce their partners.
- Use a name game to help students remember names and to add interest to introductions. For example, have students make up an adjective to go with their own names (e.g., Running Raoul, Happy Holly, Darling Deterrica, Curious Carl). As students introduce themselves, have them name the previous two students along with their descriptors.
- Make copies of a line drawing of the school’s mascot. Let students sign their own copies and write personal facts (e.g., names of brothers or sisters, pets, likes and dislikes, favorite activities or foods) on the drawings. Post these on a bulletin board so students can read about each other.
- Ask students to complete a brief questionnaire identifying their interests, favorite subjects, hobbies, and so on. Upper elementary students can complete a series of open-ended statements that reflect their interests or preferences (e.g., “Today I feel . . .” or “The thing I like doing best is . . .”).

The activities described next can be used the first day or later in the week, after students are more acquainted with one another or after you have had time to prepare for the activity.

- Make a puzzle with student names. For example, leave out a few letters in each name for students to fill in, or list first and last names in separate columns in scrambled order, and let students match names. Students can also identify names arranged in a seek-and-find puzzle.
- Set aside a few minutes before the children leave to review the day's activities and to discuss with the students what they learned, found difficult, liked best, and so forth. Say a few words about upcoming events and activities. Comment on good work and behavior to reinforce your expectations and to keep the tone positive.
- Have students from last year's class—you'll need to plan this well ahead—write letters to students in this year's class, telling them what to expect, what was fun about the year, suggestions for study, and what they learned during the year. Share these letters with this year's students.
- Have students bring a paper bag containing three to five objects—such as books, pictures, or toys—that tell something about themselves. Let students use these props to introduce themselves on the second or third day of school. Split the activity into two segments, if necessary, to maintain attention and interest.
- Make up a questionnaire in the form of a scavenger hunt; for example, "Name a student who has three brothers and who plays soccer." Have the students work in groups to see how many of their classmates they can identify.
- Ask the students to bring in one item or a picture of an item that represents them. Students will explain the meaning of their items to the class and then put them on a bulletin board, forming a collage of student interests and experiences.

Presentation and Discussion of Rules, Procedures, and Consequences. Soon after the introductions, usually after the initial room description, present the major rules and procedures. School rules should be covered along with your classroom rules. Major consequences associated with the rules should be described at the same time. Plan to review the rules later, perhaps on the second and third days, to underscore their importance and help students remember them. Some teachers test students on the rules, documenting each student's knowledge and understanding of them. Posting the rules is a common reminder. You may also have copies made of the rules and procedures and send them home for parent signatures. See Chapter 4 for a discussion of writing rules with your students.

Teach important procedures as they are needed, rather than all at once. For example, during this initial discussion you will probably want to teach procedures for using restrooms and moving about the room, obtaining help, asking questions, and talking. Later in the day, as they are needed, teach other procedures such as those for major transitions (e.g., ending the day, leaving and entering the room at

“The hardest part about goin’ back to school is learning how to whisper again.”



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lunch time or before and after recess) as well as procedures associated with the cafeteria or other out-of-room areas. Your opening routine (see Chapter 4) will probably be used on the second day of school, so you may wish to wait until then to describe it.

Procedures for special equipment such as laptops or tablets can wait until you're ready to use that equipment, and small-group procedures should not be introduced until those activities begin. The idea is to provide students with the information they need to successfully complete the activities required of them in the first days of school and to help them feel confident in their new classroom environment. It may take several mini-lessons and practice with feedback across the first few days to help students learn these routines.

On the second day of school, review the rules and major procedures students need to know. This reinforces your expectations for appropriate behavior and reminds students of rules and procedures they may have forgotten. Acknowledge and/or compliment students as they meet your expectations. When correcting student behavior at the beginning of school, remind students of what rule or procedure needs to be followed. In the primary grades particularly, you will have to observe students carefully for several weeks to be sure they are following procedures correctly and to give cues, prompts, and feedback to help them learn class routines.

When you present your class rules and procedures, set a positive tone by emphasizing the benefits to everyone: “These rules will help us have an enjoyable class in which everyone can learn. We all know that our classroom will work better when everyone respects others’ rights” or “When we allow someone to speak without interrupting, we are showing that we are good listeners.” If some procedure or rule is difficult to follow, you might acknowledge this as you discuss it: “I know it isn’t easy to remember to raise your hand before speaking when we are having an

interesting discussion, but this gives everyone a chance to participate” or “It will be hard not to start using the equipment right away, but we need to wait for directions so no one is injured.” Explanations such as these help students understand and accept what might otherwise be seen as arbitrary rules.

Content Activities. Be sure to select activities that are uncomplicated yet maintain student attention. Assignments should allow for differences in speed of completion, so be sure to have backup activities for students who complete work early. Consult your teacher’s manuals and curriculum guides and talk with experienced teachers to get ideas about appropriate beginning content activities for the subjects at your grade level.

Productive Time Fillers. Periodically, you will have to fill in time between activities or before and after major transitions. For example, students may complete an assignment earlier than you anticipated, but there may not be enough time to finish another activity before starting the next event on the day’s schedule. There may also be times when students need a short break after an intensive lesson. Filling these times with constructive activity is better than trying to stretch out an already-completed task or just letting students amuse themselves. Ideas include having a good book to read to the children or some simple games that can be played in the classroom (e.g., Seven Up, Name Bingo, Baseball Math, Spelling Bee). Use handouts with puzzles, riddles, or story starters for creative writing. You can also lead the children in group exercises, sing songs, listen to a good children’s story, or have a bulletin board of creative writing ideas. You might have a “share and tell” time in which students focus on telling what they know about a particular topic (e.g., pets, hobbies). Ask other teachers for ideas, and accumulate a file so you will be ready with a filler when one is needed.

Administrative Activities. If you use textbooks, you will have to distribute them. You may wish to issue only one or two textbooks on the first day; some teachers wait a day or two before distributing any textbooks and instead use handouts for assignments, especially if class enrollment is likely to change. When you do give out books, you may have to record book numbers for each student, either using a standard or online form. You should also determine school policies in this area. For example, some schools require that books issued to students be kept covered at all times. If so, you will need a supply of covers on hand, and you must teach the children how to cover the books. In lower grades, it might be better to do the job yourself or enlist the help of parents or an aide. Even in higher grades, some students will have forgotten how to cover books. Plan to show the whole class, and schedule plenty of time for this event.

Determine whether there are any materials that students must take home with them on the first day or later in the week (this might include information about the breakfast and lunch program, school policy on attendance, time of arrival and departure for children, etc.). Keep a file of extra copies of these materials for students who enter school later in the year.

Communicating with Parents and Guardians

Up to now we have focused on preparing for the beginning of school and establishing early positive relationships with your students. However, a vital part of relationship building will be to connect with parents and families in ways that involve them in their children's schooling.

Parent involvement is a positive factor in children's academic and social growth (Jeynes, 2005; Walker & Hoover-Dempsey, 2008, 2015). Current research suggests that parent involvement may make its most important contribution through its influence on the student beliefs and behaviors that lead to achievement (Hattie, 2009; Walker & Hoover-Dempsey, 2006). As parents find significant ways to participate in their children's schooling, they model for their children the importance of education and help bring together the cultures of home and school.

Establishing Formal and Informal Communication. One of your first steps at the beginning of school will be to establish some means of formal communication with parents/guardians, such as sending a letter containing essential information about your class that has not already been covered in school handouts. This beginning link with families opens the door to further contact. Sometimes teachers at one grade level collaborate on one letter. Otherwise, write one of your own, and have it ready to be sent home with students at the end of the first day. Include the following points in your letter:

- A brief introduction of yourself
- Materials or supplies the child will need
- Statements about school policy, achievement, and progress
- Your conference times and how parents may contact you (school phone number, your email address)
- Curriculum units you will teach and special events coming up during the year
- Events especially for families (e.g., back-to-school or school preview night, open house, special events, parent-teacher conferences)
- Information about homework, including calendars and assignment sheets, requests to sign homework, and other daily or weekly information available on your voice mail and email
- Invitation to be classroom volunteers
- School, classroom, or student newsletters
- Breakfast and lunch programs (if this information has not already been provided by the school)

Depending on your school's population and demographics, you may want to consider bridging possible language barriers and include a translation of your letter in the predominant language. You may also wish to attach a handout describing class rules and major procedures (especially those relating to assignments) along with a survey or questionnaire asking parents about their child and their hopes and expectations for the coming year. In this way parents can also alert you to special problems that you may need to know.

Your letter should be cheerful, friendly, and, above all, neat, legible, grammatically correct, and free of misspellings or typos. It is easy to be overwhelmed at the beginning of the year with the abundance of tasks and to let this letter be rushed. But you want to create a good impression and a professional image, and you have only one chance to make a good first impression! Ask a friend to proofread the letter to be sure it is clear, correct, and easy to read. You may also want to consider sending two copies of important letters and enclosures, one for parents to keep and one to be returned with their signatures so you know they received it (see an example letter at the end of the chapter). You can also post important information on your class website.

The early letter home is an important initial contact with parents and families, but it is only a first step, a one-way formal communication wherein you provide them with information. Your ultimate goal is to establish a dialogue between home and school and to invite more interactive communication as the year proceeds. Begin implementing some of the following measures in your subsequent contacts with parents:

- Encourage classroom visits.
- Engage in brief conversations and exchanges during school programs and events.
- Make and encourage phone calls.
- Exchange notes via paper or email.
- Plan informal home visits.

Technology adds additional considerations for communicating with parents. The privacy of students and the confidentiality of their records require that teachers be cognizant of how they and their students use technology. For example, parental permission must be sought in writing to post any student work, name, likeness, or photograph online. Note your school district's policies that govern online posting about students and follow them. It is also helpful to know your district's email policy for communications with parents. Written communication online can have different interpretations. Know how to phrase and format text so that it is courteous and professional. Keep in mind that all communications written from a district-owned computer (even a teaching journal you type for yourself there) are accessible by subpoena.

Additionally, teachers need to remember the potential lack of equitable access at home. Not all families may be able to access email messages or receive text updates; therefore, it is important to retain communication through other avenues (e.g., paper notes home, phone calls) rather than alienate students by forcing their families to disclose they are a noncomputer family (Seiter, 2007). For other suggestions about how to reach out to parents, visit the website for the National PTA (www.pta.org) and consider their Standards for Family-School Partnerships.

Barriers to Effective Communication. In spite of your best efforts to establish positive relationships with parents, you may encounter obstacles stemming from *practical*, *psychological*, and *cultural* sources. In terms of *practical* difficulties,

hardships imposed by low income, poverty, work schedules, child care, transportation, language barriers, or limited educational background can make families feel either inadequate to interact with the schools or unable to do so (Gorski, 2013).

Psychological barriers can derive from a parent's unhappy school history, memories of poor achievement or mistreatment at school, or personal struggles with poor mental or physical health. If these factors come into play, parents may feel intimidated by perceived school authority and may be poorly equipped to participate (Gavin & Greenfield, 1998; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). Schools' and families' mutual misunderstandings of school values and practices as well as perceived differences in home and school expectations can raise *cultural* barriers to parent involvement (Delgado-Gaitan, 2004; Drummond & Stipek, 2004). All these factors require that teachers take into account the multiple influences on student learning and behavior and shape classroom policies to serve both student outcomes and family involvement.

Walker and Hoover-Dempsey (Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, 2008, 2015) offer research-based suggestions for improving family-school partnerships. Some of these ideas require the commitment of the entire school both administratively and at the classroom level; others offer teachers suggestions for bridging home and school.

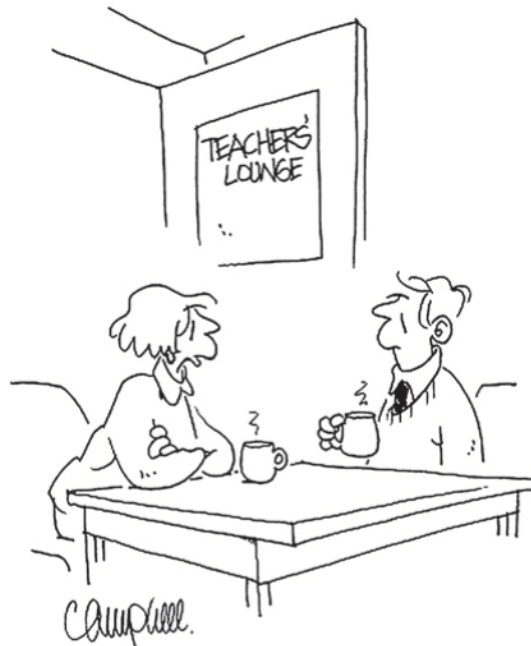
- Improve school climate by developing welcoming strategies that respect and capitalize on family strengths.
- Work with the existing parent-teacher structures to include a variety of ways parents can be involved.
- Collaborate with after-school programs as points of contact.
- Capitalize on student-centered events (e.g., concerts, athletic events, student programs) that draw parents in, and ask for volunteers.

These and many other suggestions are available in the literature; see Further Reading for references.

Special Problems

It is not possible to predict every problem that could occur in the first few days of school, but it is possible to identify several that occur commonly, occasionally, or rarely. If you are prepared for the commonly occurring problems and at least not surprised by the occasional or rare event, you will be able to respond appropriately.

Interruptions by Office Staff, Parents, Custodians, and Others (Common). If you can reschedule the issue for a noninstructional time, do so. If it cannot be delayed, manage the interruption without leaving the room. Invite the person into your room, and face your students as you talk with the person. If the interruption is likely to last more than a few seconds, or if you must leave the room, give students something to do before continuing the conference (e.g., continue working, read silently, rest heads on desks). Let the person wait, not your class. Have materials for



"I know I can train them to be thoughtful productive citizens if I can ever get past sit."

Martha F. Campbell/The Cartoon Stock

one or two planned activities ready for an unforeseen or lengthy interruption. Remember that your liability for your class continues even when you must leave the room; therefore, you should provide suitable supervision.

Late Arrivals on the First Day (Common). Greet late arrivals as warmly as you did the other students. Tell them you will talk to them about what they missed as soon as you can. Show them where to sit, and incorporate them into the present activity. When you have the total class involved in independent work, meet with these children to explain anything they may have missed.

One or More Children Are Assigned to Your Class after the First Day (Common). Try to meet with these students before school so that you can explain rules and procedures to them and handle necessary paperwork. If you have already distributed books to the class, make sure these students also get texts. If you can't meet these students ahead of time, use the first available opportunity while the rest of your class is occupied. Be warm and welcoming with these students; you want to communicate that you are pleased that they have joined the class, not that they are

inconvenient! Appoint one or more responsible students to be “buddies” with the new students to help familiarize them with the classroom and school procedures and rules. The amount of assistance you can expect from these buddies depends on their grade level. Be sure to monitor new students carefully to help them adjust to your class and to learn appropriate behavior. Anticipate receiving several late arrivals when you distribute materials during the first days of class. Keep a folder with extra sets of materials clipped together. When new students are added to your class, you’ll be ready to provide them and their parents with the necessary forms and other materials that have accumulated.

A Child Forgets Lunch Money or Supplies (Common). Be familiar with your school’s policies. The principal or school nurse may have an emergency fund for students without lunch money. Some schools allow students to charge a lunch in an emergency. It’s a good idea to keep a couple of lunches’ worth of small change on hand. Also, have one day’s worth of supplies available for students who forget theirs. If a student continues to forget supplies, you may have to check with parents to see that they are aware that the materials are needed. If you suspect that the family cannot afford the supplies, see whether your school or parent–teacher organization has funds for helping such students.

Large Amounts of Paperwork During the First Week of School (Common). This may be difficult, but try to do as little paperwork as possible during class time. Plan to spend extra time before and after school, and arrange your personal schedule to accommodate it. This will pay off in reduced tension over the long run. If you must do clerical work during class time, do it quickly while the children are engaged in activities. Monitor the class while you work, and avoid losing eye contact with your students for long periods. Create a checklist (a spreadsheet program works well) for all paperwork and money the children will be turning in during the first few days of school. A glance at your master checklist will show you which children need reminders.

A Child Forgets Bus Number or Misses Bus (Occasional). Know your school’s dismissal routines and times. Help to avoid this type of problem by rehearsing bus procedures with students. Consider putting a sticker or other label on younger students, identifying how they are to get home (e.g., car, bus number, walking). This way you or another adult in the building can assist any confused students quickly. Make certain that students are not left alone while waiting for a ride, and reassure them that the parent or other person picking them up will arrive soon. Have bus numbers and parents’ and emergency phone numbers on hand if problems do arise.

Shortage of Textbooks, Vital Equipment, or Materials (Occasional). Before school begins, check on the availability of textbooks and your equipment, and find

out your school's procedures for getting the needed materials into your room. When you discover shortages, report them to the school office. If you must begin the year without enough texts, you may be able to have students share books, or you might arrange to share a class set with another teacher. If you have no texts at all in some subject, perhaps you can find earlier editions of the text in storage to tide you over or check online for resources that match your content. Depending on the subject, teacher-prepared materials may be sufficient.

A Student With Special Needs Has Difficulty Understanding or Following Directions (Occasional). Seat the student close to you, and engage the student in simple activities. Work individually with this student only after the rest of the class is busy. As soon as possible, talk to the resource teacher to determine what the student is capable of doing; then plan the student's educational program. If possible, talk to the teacher from the preceding year for suggestions. You will also find it helpful to set up a conference with the parents soon after the year has begun. For further suggestions, see Chapter 12.

Crying (Occasional). Younger children especially may cry for no apparent reason early in the school year. Sometimes the crying stops fairly quickly if you can distract the child and engage him or her in some activity. Sometimes it helps to assign a friend to accompany the child to get a drink of water, wash his or her face, and then come back to join the class. Be understanding and try to find out the possible cause for the tears, but do not reinforce the crying by giving the child excessive attention or sympathy. If the crying is not disruptive, the child can remain in his or her seat until the episode is over. If the crying is disruptive, take the child out of the room, or have someone from the office come to get him or her.

Wetting (Occasional). Although accidental wetting is more common with younger children, it sometimes occurs even in the upper grades, especially during the first few days of school. This kind of accident is extremely embarrassing to the child, and the teacher should make every effort not to add to the child's discomfort. Have paper towels on hand to facilitate the cleanup, and handle the matter as privately as possible. Arrange to call home, or have an office worker call to request a change of clothes. Later, talk privately with the child to determine why he or she did not go to the restroom in time. With some younger children, you may have to contact the parents and keep a change of clothes at school as a precaution. In general with younger children, the teacher must schedule regular restroom breaks and even remind some children to use the restroom regularly.

A Child Becomes Very Sick or Is Injured (Rare). Prior to the first day, identify the ways you can contact the school office for emergency help. If the child has a known medical condition (such as asthma or seizures) and you have been previously informed of what to do, follow directions and stay calm. In other cases, phone the

office, or send a messenger requesting someone to come to get the child. Do not leave the child unattended. Activate the 9-1-1 emergency system if a student's health appears in jeopardy.

A Schoolwide Emergency Arises (Rare). Know the policies for handling school emergencies (e.g., fire, tornado, lockdown). Keep calm, follow the procedures given (e.g., lining up, class gathering location), and make sure to take a class roster with emergency contact information with you.

Preparing for a Substitute

During the first weeks of school, create a handbook for the substitutes who may teach in your absence. Always assume that these people have never been to your school before. This handbook should include the following:

- Class roll
- Seating chart
- Copy of your classroom rules and consequences
- Daily schedule
- List of medical alerts and medication times for various students
- Emergency lesson plans (in case you are unable to leave current ones)
- Names of teachers and students who can provide assistance
- Emergency procedures
- Map of the school

Leave this handbook in a prominent place in your classroom or in the school office so that it is immediately available when a substitute arrives. Tape a note permanently to your desk ("Substitute's notebook in bottom drawer").

■ Who Will I Teach? Students Who Arrive After the School Year Has Begun

It's the end of September and Mrs. Kim's fourth-graders have settled nicely into the classroom's routines. At mid-morning on Monday of the fourth week Mrs. Kim receives a message on the intercom informing her that a new student, Donte, has transferred from another school district and will be coming to her room in 10 minutes. "Class," she says with a smile, "I'd like to let you know that we have a new student, Donte, on the way to join us. He won't know any of us, so let's make him feel welcome. I'm going to pass out your name cards to put on your desks for the rest of the day so Donte can begin learning names. Also, he will need some help figuring out how our class works and what he needs to do . . ."

Pause and Consider:

1. What initial impression will students have of Donte based on Ms. Kim's reaction to the intercom announcement?
2. Can you anticipate some strategies that Ms. Kim could use that would help a new student?
3. What are some concerns that a child might be expected to have when entering a new classroom?
4. How might students in the class help a new student?

It is quite common for new students to arrive after the school year has begun. When such arrivals occur during the first week or so of school, it's relatively easy to accommodate them because the teacher is still in the process of organizing content activities and teaching procedures and routines. When arriving later in the year, new students take more effort and planning to accommodate. Unfortunately, new students sometimes arrive without much notice, so it's a good idea to have some procedures in place to accommodate them when it happens. It's also a good idea if, like Mrs. Kim, teachers project a positive attitude about the new arrival and enlist their students' support of the effort. The following items are useful strategies to prepare for late arrivals and to manage their transition into the new classroom:

- Keep essential handouts and materials in clearly marked folders. Then you will be able to give copies as needed to late arrivals. Note that these folders will do double duty for absent students.
- Use volunteers to choose buddies for new students. Buddies can show a new student around the school, help learn your classroom routines, and be lunch partners during the first week.
- Make copies of rules and major procedures so that new students have another way to learn about classroom routines.
- Assign the new student to a nearby desk or table for easy monitoring during the first week or so. You can reassign different seating later, if necessary, after the student has become more acclimated.
- Contact the child's parent(s) or guardian as soon as possible to welcome them to the school and to your classroom community and to begin to establish a working relationship.
- Check with the child from time to time during the next week or so and provide assistance as needed to help with the transition.

Some children change schools several times during their elementary years, so some of the children who arrive later in the school year may experience this phenomenon multiple times. Several factors can cause student mobility, including changes in parents' employment, divorce or other relationship problems, poverty, and associated housing issues. Research indicates that multiple school changes

have a negative impact on children's achievement and attitudes toward school, and are linked to a higher probability of dropping out of school before graduation (Rumberger, 2003). Research also indicates that *teacher support* and *peer acceptance* have a positive impact on the academic performance of children who change schools (Gruman, Harachi, Abbott, Catalano, & Fleming, 2008). This mitigating effect was noted even after controlling for other possible predictors of the children's at-risk status. It is therefore important to give special attention to students who arrive later in the school year and to monitor their progress and integration into the school environment. Following are additional recommendations that may prove helpful for such students (Popp, Grant, & Stronge, 2009; Rumberger, 2003):

- Assess the child's reading, language arts, and arithmetic skills as soon as possible so that you can be sure instruction is provided at the proper level. Also review any records that accompany the child's transfer materials to get more information about her or his situation at home.
- Plan to meet with the student before or after school or during lunch and other open times to get to know the student and provide some orientation to your class.
- Keep extra school supplies available in case the child needs them.
- Pair the new student with another student for assistance in catching up with some content.
- When you use groups, be sure to assign the new student to a group whose members are likely to be helpful and welcoming.
- If you have volunteer tutoring assistance available for your class, consider assigning someone to this student.
- Pay attention to these new students. Give positive feedback for their effort when they work hard, and provide support when they struggle.

■ Chapter Summary

Beginning the school year organized and prepared is vital to setting a successful direction for students. One key to beginning the year is establishing a positive climate in the classroom through modeling courtesy and kindness, communicating effectively, including all students, and building a sense of "we." Planning for the first days of school also includes providing activities that acquaint students with one another and with you; teaching the classroom rules, procedures, and consequences; and focusing content activities to review previous learning. Elementary teachers also plan the first days of school to build relationships with students' families. Letters of introduction in print typically include information that parents need (e.g., class supply list, classroom rules, teacher contact information, highlights of key content/activities/dates for the year, weekly routines). Finally, teachers prepare at the beginning of the year for the unexpected (e.g., interruptions, sick child,

extra paperwork, new student) by anticipating these potential challenges and having a plan in mind if they arise. Effective classroom management begins well before the first day of school with thorough planning and preparation, and is renewed each day that follows.

■ Further Reading

Brophy, J. E. (2000). Teaching. In H. J. Walberg (Series Ed.), *Educational practices*. Brussels, Belgium: International Academy of Education. Available at www.ibe.unesco.org/en/services/online-materials/publications/educational-practices.html

This booklet, prepared for the International Bureau of Education, synthesizes much of what is known through contemporary research about teaching. As an easy-to-read description of good teaching, this booklet presents overarching themes, research, and classroom descriptions for classroom climate, learning, curriculum, discourse, activities, engagement, and assessment. Reading this publication could easily prompt thoughtful preparation for the start of a school year.

Erwin, J. C. (2003). Giving students what they need. *Educational Leadership*, 61(1), 19–23.

This article emphasizes the importance of teacher–student relationships as an integral tool of classroom management and the need to create those conditions that encourage internal motivation and student responsibility, as opposed to external motivation, which gives teachers full responsibility for motivating students.

Pianta, R. C. (2006). Classroom management and relationships between children and teachers: Implications for research and practice. In C. M. Evertson & C. S. Weinstein (Eds.), *Handbook of research on classroom management: Research, practice, and contemporary issues* (pp. 685–709). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

The author condenses the research literature on teacher–student relationships to show the importance of these interactions for the individual student as well as the classroom community.

Randolph, C. H., & Evertson, C. M. (1995). Managing for learning: Rules, roles, and meanings in a writing class. *Journal of Classroom Interaction*, 30(2), 17–25.

The authors argue that management and content are interwoven. As teachers and students negotiate ways of interacting with academic content and with each other, and as they define the roles that each plays, they establish meanings that influence what academic content can be learned and how it is learned.

Walker, J. M. T., & Hoover-Dempsey, K. V. (2008). Parent involvement. In T. L. Good (Ed.), *21st century education: A reference handbook* (Vol. 2, pp. 382–391). Los Angeles: Sage.

This entry explains the importance of involving parents in the classroom and provides recommendations for doing so.

www.educationworld.com/back_to_school/

This link provides a number of practical tips for beginning school. The broader site (www.educationworld.com) also provides a large quantity of helpful information, resources, and ideas.

www.proteacher.com

This website for teachers includes tips for planning and message boards on a range of topics in elementary schools.

www.superteachertools.net/instantclassroom/#.U7pUII6wBbw

This website offers an interactive tool to set up multiple classroom arrangements.

www.teachervision.com/students/resource/2878.html

This resource outlines several ways to get to know your students with links to specific examples.

■ Suggested Activities

1. Return to the vignette of Ms. Stevens earlier in the chapter. Write a response to the following questions: What style of authority does Ms. Stevens demonstrate? How will her teaching of this initial procedure affect her future teaching?
2. Respond to the following questions with a partner: Can you remember what it was like to start school when you were attending elementary school? When adults are asked to recall school beginnings, they can rarely remember much detail about what teachers did, but they often remember their own personal experiences, problems, or concerns. Do you remember a year when you felt especially welcomed? Was there a year when you felt left out or unexcited about your new class? How should you attempt to take your students' concerns into account at the beginning of the year? Because your personal concerns and anxieties may be heightened during those critical days, how can you deal with your own feelings and accommodate student concerns at the same time? How will your beginning-of-the-year choices reflect your philosophy of education?
3. Read Case Studies 6.1 and 6.2, which describe teachers beginning the year in diverse settings. As you read them, consider the following questions:
 - a. To what extent are the principles described in this and previous chapters in evidence in each case?
 - b. In spite of subject-matter and grade-level differences, there are similarities between the teachers. Identify as many of them as you can.

- c. What differences are apparent between the teachers in their beginning-of-year activities? Which activities would you use? Why?
 - d. In Case 6.1 the teacher uses a literature-based approach to frame activities for students. In Case 6.2 the teacher makes extensive use of groups for cooperative learning. How do these approaches affect the way each teacher begins the year?
4. What do you think your students' goals and concerns will be at the beginning of the year? How can your classroom management plan accommodate them?
 5. Locate online an example teacher introduction letter to parents/families. Discuss this letter with a peer. What points of resonance do you see with your philosophy of teaching? What additional ideas would you want to include with your letter of introduction?
 6. Talk with teachers who have had several years' experience at a grade level you would like to teach. Ask them what activities they use during the first few days and how they sequence them. Teachers are often willing to share handouts and ideas. You might also ask someone to look over your lesson plan for the first day and give you suggestions.
 7. What are some ways you can initiate and sustain a positive climate in your classroom? Make a list, and interview other teachers for their ideas.

■ Case Study 6.1

BEGINNING THE YEAR IN A LITERATURE-BASED PRIMARY CLASSROOM

First-Day Activities

Time/Activity	Description
8:00–8:35 Greeting students	<p>Ms. Gonzalez greets the children as they enter, helps them put on their name tags, and checks the pronunciation of their names. She gives the students laminated name strips and tells each one to choose a desk and place the strip on it. She also tells students to put their lunch boxes in the basket, hang their book bags on their labeled coat hooks, and place their supplies on the round table at the side of the room.</p> <p>As the first students settle at their desks, Ms. Gonzalez lets each one select a piece of construction paper, write his or her name on it, and decorate it. When students have finished, they get to choose a cubby that will hold their personal belongings and tape the construction paper to the back wall of the cubby. She has placed a tape dispenser at each end of the cubbies for the students to use. Ms. Gonzalez also asks the early-arriving students to help their later-arriving classmates. As the rest of the students arrive, Ms. Gonzalez helps them settle into the classroom, checks supplies, talks with parents, and monitors students' progress. She uses a prepared set of extra materials to welcome a student not yet on her roster.</p>

(continued)

First-Day Activities

Time/Activity	Description
8:35–8:40 Introducing teacher	<p>After all buses have arrived and she feels that her students are settled, Ms. Gonzalez moves to the next activity. She does not call roll because she can tell who is absent by the remaining laminated strips. She records attendance in the school software system.</p> <p>Ms. Gonzalez, who has taught at this school for many years and already knows several of her students, briefly introduces herself and tells the children that she is looking forward to an exciting year with them. She notices that many of the children are curiously looking around the room, so she starts by describing the classroom and a few class procedures.</p>
8:40–9:00 Describing room	<p>Ms. Gonzalez points out the classroom library, and she tells students that they may get books from the library after they have finished their assignments. The students may use the beanbags and comfortable pillows while they are in the library, or they may take the books to their desks. She also shows the listening center next to the library and points out that this center can accommodate only two children at a time. Next she shows how to operate the CD player and headphones. She notes the four computers next to the listening center. Ms. Gonzalez says they won't be using the computers until next week, but she tells the students what kinds of activities they will learn to do with the computers. She also highlights materials in the science discovery center, gives procedures for this area, and tells the students that four children may work at this center at one time.</p>
9:00–9:25 Drawing self-portraits	<p>Ms. Gonzalez holds up her self-portrait, which she drew the previous day, and they discuss what self-portraits are. Ms. Gonzalez then distributes construction paper to the students and asks them to draw their own self-portraits. She also asks them to write two things about themselves on the back of the pictures.</p> <p>As the children begin, Ms. Gonzalez circulates, offers assistance, and monitors their progress. When some children become concerned about their spelling, she tells them to try their best, listen to the sounds in the words, and write what they hear. As children finish, Ms. Gonzalez tells them to select a book from the class library or go to the listening center.</p>
9:25–9:30 Procedures	<p>At 9:25 the timer rings. Ms. Gonzalez tells the children that she uses the timer to signal the end of an activity. When they hear the timer ring, they should look at her for further directions. Ms. Gonzalez sets the timer again, and the students practice this procedure as the final students complete their self-portraits. She tells the children that it is time to go to the playground, so they need to practice lining up to leave the classroom. Ms. Gonzalez explains that she will dismiss them by tables, and they should push their chairs under their desks. She demonstrates pushing in chairs and asks a student to show how it can be done quietly. She then asks students to line up quietly without crowding the person in front of them. As she dismisses each table, she compliments students for following directions.</p>
9:30–10:00 Playground	<p>While students are on the playground with another teacher, Ms. Gonzalez prepares for the next activity.</p>

First-Day Activities

Time/Activity	Description
10:00–10:10 Restrooms	Ms. Gonzalez meets her class in line at the playground and explains how they will return to the classroom. After all the students are at their desks and are looking at her, Ms. Gonzalez explains the restroom procedures. She lets one or two students practice with hanging a restroom pass on the doorknob and knocking to be sure no one is in the restroom before they open the door. She then demonstrates the use of the sink, soap, and paper towel dispenser. Students who wish then leave their seats to use the restrooms according to the procedures while Ms. Gonzalez reviews the morning with the class. When the timer rings, all students who wished to do so have taken a turn at the restrooms.
10:10–10:30 Circle time	When all the students are at their desks and looking at her, Ms. Gonzalez asks them to bring their self-portraits and quietly form a circle on the floor. Everyone, including Ms. Gonzalez, shares a self-portrait and two interesting things about him- or herself.
10:30–11:00 Story and song	The teacher follows this activity by reading a story about self-esteem. She then explains that she will be teaching the students a song called “I Like Me.” She displays the lyrics with several picture cues on a large sheet of chart paper. They practice reading the words several times; then Ms. Gonzalez sings the song. She then repeats the song, and the students join in the singing. As she dismisses the students from the circle, she collects their self-portraits. Ms. Gonzalez chooses this time to review lunch procedures. Students practice getting their lunch boxes and quietly lining up for lunch. Before they leave, Ms. Gonzalez reviews the lunchroom rules and walks the class to the cafeteria to introduce them to the lunch monitor.
11:00–11:30	Lunch.
11:30–11:50	Recess. Ms. Gonzalez takes a turn on recess duty, supervising children’s play and interactions.
11:50–12:10 Reading aloud	As the students reenter the room, Ms. Gonzalez reviews the restroom procedures with a sign she displays on the restroom doors. She allows students to follow the restroom procedures while she sits in a rocking chair with the class seated around her on the rug and reads aloud.
12:10–12:30 Discussing school rules	The class remains seated around the rocking chair, and Ms. Gonzalez explains the school rules. There are two: (1) Remain quiet in the hallways and (2) individual students must have a hall pass. After they discuss the rules, Ms. Gonzalez asks two children to repeat them to the rest of the class and explain what they mean.
12:30–1:00 Developing classroom rules	The discussion of school rules leads directly into the development of classroom rules. The students remain seated on the rug but shift their attention to the SmartBoard as she writes “Class Rules” on it. Mrs. Gonzalez tells the students they will have to raise their hands and wait to be called on during the discussion because everyone will need to hear all of the suggestions. She asks the students to suggest rules they feel are necessary for their classroom. The students raise their hands. Ms. Gonzalez calls on them and writes their responses. At this point, she is careful not to make evaluative comments on the students’ ideas. She wants them to brainstorm suggestions. The students then discuss their ideas and often expand, connect, or modify them.

(continued)

First-Day Activities

Time/Activity	Description
	The teacher ends this activity when she notices the students' attention beginning to fade. She tells them that this is a good start to their classroom rules, she will save their ideas, and they will continue with them tomorrow. At the end of this activity, the students return to their desks. Ms. Gonzalez does a quick save on her laptop as the students move.
1:00–1:35 Graphing activity	<p>Ms. Gonzalez focuses the students' attention on an easel where she has hung a large graph. The graph is drawn on brightly colored paper and is titled "How I got to school today." The graph is divided into four columns. A picture of a car, a bus, a bicycle, or a pair of shoes is at the bottom of each column. She asks the students how they got to school this morning. Did they come in a car? Did they ride the bus? Did they ride their bikes? Did they walk? As the students raise their hands, Ms. Gonzalez gives them a picture of a car, bus, bike, or shoes. The students write their names on their pictures and tape them in the appropriate columns on the graph.</p> <p>After all the pictures are placed on the graph, Ms. Gonzalez asks the students to count the number of pictures in each row and determine which row has the most and the least. She draws a bar graph that corresponds with the number of pictures in each row. She explains that the class will be learning a lot of new things this year. They will be doing science projects, math, writing, and so on. She asks them to think about things they would like to know.</p>
1:35–2:15 "What do I want to study this year?"	<p>Ms. Gonzalez turns back to the SmartBoard and writes the question, "What do I want to study this year?" Again, she asks students to raise their hands and wait to be called on because everyone should listen to the topics.</p> <p>Ms. Gonzalez creates a semantic map with all of the suggestions. She knows that many of the topics will be covered because they correspond with her curriculum guide. Other topics will be pursued through individual and small-group projects.</p>
2:15–2:30 Getting ready to go home	<p>Ms. Gonzalez reviews the day's activities by asking, "If your mom or dad asks you what you did today, what will you say?" She also asks questions about the procedures and school rules. She reminds the students to check their personal belongings and distributes notes to be taken home, including one to remind students (and inform parents) to bring an item about themselves tomorrow (e.g., picture, stuffed friend, favorite book). She asks them to leave their name tags on their desks so they can use them the next day, and she shows them how to stack their chairs. She checks to see that everyone has the things to take home and rehearses with the students the proper procedure for being dismissed. They are to leave their desks table by table and line up by the door. She asks two students to demonstrate lining up. When the bell rings, she leads the students out the classroom door and down the hall to the proper outside door for dismissal.</p>

Second-Day Activities

Time/Activity	Description
8:00–8:20 Greeting students	<p>The teacher greets the students at the door and asks them to put on their name tags, get their journal notebooks from their cubbies, and put their items from home in their cubbies. On the board, she has written the journal topic: “What I liked best about my first day of school.” She tells the students they may either write or draw a picture. She takes attendance, fills in the lunch count, and assists the students as they write.</p> <p>The timer rings to signal the end of this activity, and the teacher asks everyone to close the journals. She lets them go table by table to put their journals in their cubbies and gather on the floor. She reminds them of the procedures for leaving their desks and gathering on the floor (quickly and quietly).</p>
8:20–8:50 Introducing morning activities	<p>Ms. Gonzalez shows the students the helper chart. Every student has a job, and the jobs rotate daily. She asks the pledge leader to come to the front of the room and lead the class. She helps the pledge leader point to the words as the students repeat the Pledge of Allegiance. She then asks the calendar person to add today’s date to the calendar and name the month, day, and year. The weather person tells today’s forecast and uses the weather section from the newspaper to record today’s expected high and low temperatures. Ms. Gonzalez guides the weather person through the forecast. The song leader leads the students through the “I Like Me” song they learned the previous day. Again, Ms. Gonzalez helps the student point to the words while the class sings.</p> <p>Three students volunteer to share what they wrote in their journals. While those students get their journals, Ms. Gonzalez tells the class that journal writing will usually be the first activity every morning. After the students share, Ms. Gonzalez tells each student one thing she liked about his or her writing.</p>
8:50–9:25 Developing classroom rules	<p>Ms. Gonzalez then asks the class to look at the board. She projects the saved ideas they brainstormed yesterday for classroom rules. She asks the students whether any of the rules are alike. As the students begin to group the similar ideas, Ms. Gonzalez reminds them to raise their hands. She writes their ideas on another section of the board. After they develop six broad categories, she asks the students to think about a title for each category. When titles have been proposed for each category, she asks the students whether these would be appropriate classroom rules. After some minor rewordings, the students and Ms. Gonzalez are satisfied with the rules.</p>
9:25–9:30 Procedures	<p>The teacher asks the students to line up at the door. Several students use this time to get a drink of water or go to their cubbies. Ms. Gonzalez asks everyone to come back to the rug, and she asks a student to repeat the procedure for lining up. Ms. Gonzalez dismisses the students again and compliments them for following the procedure.</p>
9:30–10:00 P.E.	<p>While the students are in physical education, Ms. Gonzalez writes the classroom rules on a piece of chart paper.</p>
10:00–10:30 Role-playing classroom rules	<p>When the students reenter the room from P.E., they go to their seats, and the teacher points out the rules and asks each student to sign the chart. She lets each table go to the chart paper in turn. She asks the students where the rules should be posted, and they decide to hang the poster listing the rules on the wall by the board.</p>

(continued)

Second-Day Activities

Time/Activity	Description
10:30–11:00 Math activity	<p>Small groups of students volunteer to role-play an example of each rule. The small groups practice and present their demonstration. The other members of the class guess which rule the group is presenting.</p> <p>The teacher asks the students to return to their seats, and when they are seated, she asks for their attention. She is standing at the front of the room and holding geometric figures (circles, triangles, squares) made from colored construction paper. Magnets are attached to the figures so they will stick on the board.</p> <p>Ms. Gonzalez tells the students they are going to play a guessing game. She is going to make a pattern on the board with these figures, and the students will have to decide which figure goes next in the pattern. After they complete several of these examples, she asks each of them to continue this game with a partner.</p> <p>Because this is the first time the students will be working cooperatively, Ms. Gonzalez lets them begin with partners rather than in groups of three or four. As she passes out the materials, she asks them which classroom rules should apply to this activity. Several respond that they should listen to their partners and not interrupt them. Others say they should help each other. The teacher tells the students they can remain at their seats or move to a spot on the floor. She allows them 1 minute to move. As the students make patterns for their partners, she circulates throughout the room and offers assistance. She sets the timer to signal the end of the activity.</p> <p>When the timer rings, the majority of the partners stop their patterning activity and turn to the teacher. A few continue to work, so Ms. Gonzalez asks a student to tell everyone what the procedure is. Then she sets the timer again. When it rings, everyone turns to her. She asks the partners to put the geometric figures in the storage bags. When she dismisses the students, they give her their bags of figures and quietly line up for lunch.</p>
11:00–11:30	Lunch.
11:30–11:50	Recess.
11:50–12:10 Reading aloud	Restroom break. Ms. Gonzalez sits in the rocking chair, and the students gather around her as she reads a story they have selected from the class library.
12:10–1:00 Writing sample	<p>Ms. Gonzalez likes to collect a writing sample from each of her students early in the year. This sample goes in the student's portfolio and serves as a baseline for the student's writing progress. Because the class has been sharing about themselves, this writing sample will be part of a book called <i>All about Me</i>. Ms. Gonzalez has prepared a small book with lines at the bottom of the pages for writing and spaces for illustrations. She brainstorms ideas for the book with the students and reminds them to use invented spellings if they need to.</p> <p>The students return to their seats, and Ms. Gonzalez monitors their progress, paying close attention to students who are frustrated. Several children are concerned about their writing, so she tells them to draw the pictures first and then write about the pictures. Some students finish before the timer rings, so Ms. Gonzalez invites them to select a book from the class library.</p>

Second-Day Activities

Time/Activity	Description
1:00–1:15 Sharing	When the timer rings again, Ms. Gonzalez asks whether anyone wants to share his or her book. She collects the books from the students who do not want to share, and everyone gathers on the rug. Four students share, and everyone listens attentively. Students comment on the books and applaud the volunteers. Ms. Gonzalez takes up these remaining books and then dismisses students in groups of four to get their items about themselves brought from home out of their cubbies.
1:15–1:55 “Getting to know you”	When all students are seated, Ms. Gonzalez models how she would like the students to share their items from home. She talks about her photograph, the people in it, and why they are important to her. Then she stands, walks the photo around the circle, and is reseated. All the students share their items following this pattern.
1:55–2:15 Sustained silent reading	While they are still in the circle, Ms. Gonzalez explains the procedures for sustained silent reading. She says this will be the last activity every day. The students will select one or two books or magazines and find a quiet place to read. After they choose a place, they will remain there until the timer rings. Ms. Gonzalez says she will also be reading during this time. She dismisses the students two at a time from the circle. They put away their sharing-time objects, select books, and quietly choose a place to read. After they are all reading, Ms. Gonzalez reminds a few students to be quiet. She also reads, but she keeps a close eye on the students. Even though 20 minutes has been set for today’s silent reading, Ms. Gonzalez knows that after the procedures are taught, the students will read for only 7 or 8 minutes. This amount of reading time will steadily increase throughout the school year.
2:15–2:30 Getting ready to go home	When the timer rings again, Ms. Gonzalez dismisses the students two at a time to return their books and collect their belongings to go home. When the students are ready to go, Ms. Gonzalez leads a brief review of today’s activities and the classroom rules.
2:30 Dismissal	Ms. Gonzalez reminds the students how to line up and calls the bus riders to line up first. She compliments the students on another good day and leads them out of the room.

Case Study 6.2**BEGINNING THE YEAR IN A FIFTH-GRADE MATH CLASS USING COOPERATIVE LEARNING**

Ms. James teaches math in a departmentalized fifth grade. She repeats the same lesson with four groups of fifth-graders each day. The following narrative describes the first day of class for the initial group of students.

First-Day Activities

Activity	Description
Before the bell	Students attend a schoolwide assembly to welcome them and introduce new faculty members. Classes are dismissed by grade level to walk with their first-period teachers to their rooms. Desks are arranged in seven groups of four or five students each. Ms. James has placed a yellow folder marked with the period and group number on each group of desks. As students enter, Ms. James tells them that they may sit wherever they choose today but that seats will be assigned later in the week.
Initial greeting (4 minutes)	The teacher smiles and introduces herself, telling students about her family and some out-of-school interests. She tells students she is a hard worker, and she also expects them to work hard. She says she will be in her room starting an hour before school, and she will stay in her room until 4:30 each day, so students can come in if they need more explanation or assistance. “The most important thing in this class is trying. We will all make mistakes and get stuck, but by working together we will be able to solve the problems and learn a lot of new things.”
Introduction (10 minutes)	<p>Ms. James says that even though all students have studied math for the past 5 years, she is curious about whether they know how important and useful it is. She elicits ideas about how math might be useful, and she asks students to raise their hands and wait to be called on before speaking during this activity. During the discussion, she calls attention to a bulletin board that has several colorful posters highlighting math applications. Ms. James thanks students on several occasions for raising their hands and for listening well. When a couple of students call out, she reminds them to raise their hands before she calls on them.</p> <p>Ms. James comments on the grouping of desks. She explains that in her classes students work in groups much of the time and that this can be very helpful in learning. She says they won’t always work in groups; they will also keep an individual notebook and take tests by themselves. For many assignments, however, they will be expected to work together and assist each other in understanding the content and solving problems. She comments that students often find this to be not only a good way to learn but also an enjoyable experience. A student asks whether she can choose her group. Ms. James responds that, as the teacher, she must reserve the right to arrange the groups. Because group membership will change at times, however, students will have an opportunity to work with a variety of other students. Ms. James also emphasizes that working in groups with others is a good way to get to know them. “It’s important that you be able to work with anyone in school, just as you’ll have to outside of school,” she comments.</p>

First-Day Activities

Activity	Description
Initial presentation of procedures (6 minutes)	Ms. James thanks the students for raising their hands before speaking. She tells the boys and girls that she has a few other procedures that will be needed for the class to run smoothly and she will go over some of them now and save the others for later, when they start group work. She says that during class, when she is talking or when a student is presenting something to the whole class, all students are to remain in their seats. If they wish to comment or ask a question, they should raise their hands and wait for their turn. At other times, when they are working in groups or on individual assignments, they may talk if it is to someone in their group and it is about the assignment. She demonstrates the appropriate volume for small-group conversation. If the students need to sharpen a pencil or get materials during work times, they may do so without permission so long as they do not disturb others.
Initial group task (8 minutes)	The teacher designates students in each group as Chair #1, Chair #2, Chair #3, and so on. She tells them that when they work in groups, different Chairs will have different roles and that these rotate so that each student gets a chance to do different things. "Chair #1, please open the group folder on the desk and look in the right-hand pocket. Take out a yellow card and a class card for each student." She asks Chair #1 in each group to distribute these items. Ms. James then has students make yellow name cards for their desks and fill out class cards for her. While students work on this task, she returns to her desk for a couple of minutes to attend to administrative matters, repeatedly checking students' behavior. She then asks Chair #1 to collect the class cards.
Description of procedures (10 minutes)	Ms. James asks Chair #2 to look in the left-hand pocket and get out the blue sheet listing classroom policies and procedures and to give one to each group member. She tells students that everyone will need a three-ring binder for this class and that this page should be the first one in it. She then reviews the classroom and school policies regarding absence and tardiness, leaving the room, makeup work, tests, and detention for violating rules. Ms. James explains that if she gives a warning to a student and it's ignored, she will assign a lunch detention, and the student will have to bring lunch to her room at noon and eat it there. She says, "If I have to come find you, it will be doubled." She has students write their names on the blue sheets and return them to the folders, to be put in the three-ring binders when they bring them.
End of period	Ms. James notes that time is almost up. She says that she'll explain her grading policies and class activities tomorrow. "Chair #3, if there is a new student in class assigned to your group tomorrow, would you please be responsible for helping him or her get a copy of the class policies, name card, and class card?" She asks the students to return their name cards to the folders and remain in their seats until she dismisses them. When materials have been returned to the folders and each group is seated and quiet, she dismisses the class by group. She picks up the yellow folders and replaces them with blue ones for the next class.

Second-Day Activities

Activity	Description
Before the bell	Ms. James distributes folders for each group. She greets students as they enter, asking them to take their seats with the same groups as yesterday. She directs a few new students to join groups.
Opening the period (3 minutes)	Ms. James greets the students warmly as soon as the bell rings. She reminds them that they are in groups and have a designated number that will be the same as yesterday's. She reminds Chairs #3 of their responsibility to help new members of the group.
Diagnostic test (15 minutes)	"Before we get started on today's lesson, I'd like you to answer some questions. This will not be for a grade, but I would like you to do your best. Your answers will help me understand what topics we need to review and also help me make group assignments. Turn your paper over when you finish." Ms. James distributes the diagnostic test and tells students to show their work. She monitors as students complete the test and collects the papers as they are turned over.
Description of procedures and grading policies (8 minutes)	The teacher reviews talk and movement procedures in groups for the new students. "Use group voices, please. Talk loudly enough to be heard by others but not so loudly that groups near you will hear. Like this." She demonstrates. She gives students a one-page handout describing her grading policies and explains them in detail; she then asks students to write their names on the handout and place it in their notebooks with the rules sheet. If students have not yet brought a binder to class, she has them store this sheet in the folder with their blue sheets from yesterday.
Preparation for group activity (4 minutes)	The teacher announces an activity for learning about working in groups as well as learning math concepts. She asks students to volunteer ideas about what it takes to be a good group member. Stressing positive examples, she supports especially the ideas of sharing, helping, listening, encouraging, and working hard.
Math lesson (20 minutes)	Ms. James begins by reading an article from <i>USA Today</i> , which states that the average fifth-grader in the United States watches 1,000 minutes of television a week. She asks the students whether they are surprised by this fact and then asks them to estimate how many hours of television that would be each day. She stresses that they are <i>estimating</i> and that <i>exact</i> computations are inappropriate. Next, she asks students to share what they think the article means by "the average fifth-grader." She then explains that the students will be calculating how many days of television the average fifth-grader watches in 1 year. She asks Chair #4 at each table to open the folders and distribute the materials. She adds that she will ask someone in each group to report on the group's solution. After the groups have worked for about 5 or 6 minutes, Ms. James calls on one person from each group to report on the group's results; she prompts students as needed as they describe the solution process their group used. She asks students to assess the possible effects of this amount of TV watching.
Wrap-up (5 minutes)	Ms. James asks students to comment on their roles in their groups. She also asks for suggestions about what works best for various roles. She praises the students for their creativity in developing solutions and for their effort. Ms. James announces that table assignments will change tomorrow and then dismisses the class as the next period's students begin to gather at her door.

Third-Day Activities

Activity	Description
Before the bell	Ms. James places a stack of book covers and the yellow group folders on each group of desks. On top of this stack, she places a sheet of paper that identifies the group members' names. As students enter, Ms. James tells them to check the name list at each group of desks to find their groups.
Textbook check-out (15 minutes)	Ms. James tells students they will stay in their groups for several weeks. She assigns Chair numbers to the group members and asks Chair #4 from each group to get texts from several stacks at the back of the room. While students cover their books, the teacher circulates from group to group and records book numbers.
Content activity and a new teaching strategy (17 minutes)	The teacher reviews concepts from yesterday's lesson. She asks Chair #2 to distribute materials from a box in each group. Students use the materials to work along with the teacher as she demonstrates various ways problems can be solved. She tells students they will now work in pairs, and she writes "Pair Share" on the chalkboard. Students will choose a partner from their group, work with him or her to solve a problem, and then take turns explaining the solution or demonstrating the steps to each other. "It is not enough just to work out a solution. Each of you must be able to explain to your partner how you arrived at it." Afterward, Ms. James asks volunteers to demonstrate and explain their solutions.
Group work (18 minutes)	Students are now given problems to solve as a group. These are somewhat more difficult and require several steps. Ms. James asks each group to work together to develop a way to solve each problem. She asks Chair #3 to record the solutions and Chair #5 to be moderator to make certain that everyone contributes (or if the group has only four members, Chair #4 moderates). The teacher reviews briefly, based on yesterday's discussion, what these roles entail. As the groups work on the problem, the teacher checks on progress. She then has several groups report to the class. Afterward, students are given an assignment, due the next day, which they work on for the remainder of the class. Students may work together on problems, but they are expected to show their own work on the assignment.
Wrap-up (5 minutes)	With about 5 minutes remaining in the period, the teacher asks students to put away their work, commenting that unfinished problems should be completed as homework. Then she begins a short discussion about appropriate helping by asking students what it feels like not to understand something. She also asks about ways they might react if they were in that situation. "Everyone will experience those feelings and do some of those things, especially if they're made to feel unintelligent. In this class, though, we will learn from our mistakes, and no one should be embarrassed by not understanding something. Also, helping other students is a great way to gain in understanding. I certainly understand math much better now that I have taught it than I did when I was a student." Ms. James explains that everyone will have opportunities to explain problems and answer questions in this class, but if there is something they don't understand, they should ask for another explanation. She and the class then discuss how to explain in ways that are the most helpful. The class is dismissed.

Sample Letter to Parent/Guardian

Dear Third-Grade Parent/Guardian,

My name is Ms./Mr. [Name]. I am your child's teacher, and I am looking forward to working with you this year to help your child succeed in third grade. I hope we can meet in person at our school's open house on [date] from [time] to [time]. To make sure you have access to me when you need it, the telephone number to our classroom is [telephone #]. If you call during instructional times, it will automatically go to voice mail. If you leave a message with a phone number, I will return your call as soon as possible. I am also available by email at [email address], which you can find on our class section of the school webpage [URL]. So that I may have access to you when needed, please help me by completing the attached information sheet with your emergency and preferred contact information.

The school supply list for our class is attached and can also be viewed on our school website. Please help your child bring these items to class by Monday. Also, notice that the list includes a field-trip fee for the year. This fee covers the cost of all field trips we will be taking. You may pay this fee at any point prior to the first field trip on [date].

Our class will study several themes across the year, beginning with "Families." Your child will be completing some class assignments during the next 2 weeks that will include talking with you about your family. If you have a unique tradition or special family story that you would be willing to share with our class as a part of this theme, please contact me by phone or email, or send a note with your child.

Finally, in order for our class to function efficiently, effectively, and as a community, we have a set of class rules. Please read the attached sheet listing the rules, sign that you have read them with your child, and return the signed sheet to me by Monday.

Again, I look forward to working with you this year.

Sincerely,

[signature]

Attached: Contact Information Sheet (*Please complete and return by Monday.*)

School Supply List (*Please send items by Monday, field-trip fee by [date].*)

Our Class Rules (*Please read with your child, sign, and return by Monday.*)

■ Checklist for Preparing for the Beginning of School

Check When Complete	Item	Notes
<input type="checkbox"/>	A. Are your room and materials ready? (See Chapter 3.)	_____

Check When Complete	Item	Notes
<input type="checkbox"/>	B. Have you decided on your class procedures, rules, and associated consequences? (See Chapters 4, 5, and 9.)	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	C. Are you familiar with the parts of the school that you and your students may use (e.g., cafeteria, office and office phone, halls, restroom facilities, computer lab, resource room) and any procedures for their use?	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	D. Do you have a complete class roster?	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	E. Do you have file information on your students, including information on reading and math achievement levels from previous teachers, test results, emergency contact numbers, and any other information?	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	F. Do you know whether you have any students with disabilities who should be accommodated in your room arrangement or in your instruction? (See Chapter 12.)	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	G. Do you have adequate numbers of textbooks, desks, and class materials?	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	H. Do you have the teacher's editions of your textbooks?	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	I. Do you know the procedure for the arrival and departure of students on the first day? For every day after that?	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	J. Are students' name tags ready? Do you have blank ones for unexpected students?	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	K. Do you have your first day's plan of activities ready?	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	L. Does your daily schedule accommodate special classes (e.g., physical education, music) or "pull-out" programs (e.g., Title I reading, resource room students, programs for the gifted)?	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	M. Do you have time-filler activities prepared?	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	N. Do you have a letter ready to send home to parents with information about needed school materials?	_____

(continued)

Check When Complete	Item	Notes
<input type="checkbox"/>	O. Do you know when and how you can obtain assistance from school staff (e.g., the resource teacher, school nurse, librarian, office personnel, counselor)?	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	P. Do you have a plan to handle a child's or school emergency?	_____

MyEducationLab *Self-Check 6.1*

MyEducationLab *Self-Check 6.2*

MyEducationLab *Self-Check 6.3*

MyEducationLab *Application Exercise 6.1* Using what you've learned in this chapter, view the video and respond to the questions.



MyEducationLab *Application Exercise 6.2* Using what you've learned in this chapter, read and respond to this scenario.

MyEducationLab *Application Exercise 6.3* Using what you've learned in this chapter, view the video and respond to the questions.



MyEducationLab *Application Exercise 6.4* Using what you've learned in this chapter, view the video and respond to the questions.



MyEducationLab *Application Exercise 6.5* Using what you've learned in this chapter, read and respond to this scenario.

MyEducationLab *Classroom Management Simulation 6.1* Engage with the Classroom Management Simulation *Helping All Students Believe They Can Achieve*.

