

TeaCher Talk

Advice for teachers from teachers

Collected & edited by @t_isforteaching

www.tisforteachingblog.com

Table of Contents:

*Click to go directly to the given topic. To return here click the TOC icon found throughout the document.

[Thank you...](#)

[1st Day of School](#)

[Lesson Planning](#)

[Behavior & Classroom Management](#)

[Parent Contact](#)

[Organization](#)

[Libraries & Reading](#)

[Co-Teaching](#)

[Other](#)

Thank you..

If you weren't already aware, the online teaching community is amazing! When I set out on this little project to assist 1st year teachers; my goal was to answer questions, ease nerves, and give some encouragement. To do so, I reached out to the online teaching community through Instagram and was truly overwhelmed by the response! Over 30 first year teachers reached out to contribute and ask questions! Over 30 teachers with more than a combined 170 years of experience stepped up without hesitation to offer assistance, answer questions, and give encouragement. I cannot say thank you enough to those that jumped at the opportunity to help. This project has turned into so much more than I originally thought it could be and I am beyond excited to share it with all of you.

Before we dive into it I want to thank all of the teachers that participated and let you know where to find them in this online teaching community. All of their responses to the given questions will be posted anonymously throughout this series (each bullet point indicates an answer from a different teacher); however, I want you to know where and how to find them online so that you can connect and collaborate with them.

Contributing Teachers

Find them on Instagram:

sublimeinsecond

thetiedyeteacher

miss.magee

pretty_in_primary

msbarnes5th

campfirstgrade

txteachermama

thetalkativeteacher

my_teacher_style

alaverman

tenderlovingkindergarten

mrscrumpsclass207

planning.with.mrs.priest

fifthgradevibes

Teaching with Behavior

teacher_queenbees

elephantsin8th

lipstickandliteracy

or read their blogs:

The Tie Dye Teacher Blog

Ms. Barnes 5th

One Kreative Kindergarten

Teaching with Behavior

My Teacher Style

Lipstick and Literacy

*All accounts are linked; click on them to be directed to their site.

**Fonts are HelloBigDeal and HelloBeMyPenPal by Jen Jones and can be accessed at www.jenjonesfonts.com

**QUESTIONS FROM 1ST+
YEAR ELEMENTARY
SCHOOL TEACHERS:**

The 1st day of SCHOOL...

What do you do on the 1st day and during the 1st week of school? Any tips or tricks?

- On the first day of school I focus on getting our supplies organized, and start talking about school and classroom rules. We go on a quick tour (mostly just for new students) and out to the playground to review proper equipment use before morning recess actually starts. I like to end the day with playing some sort of community game that involves names because I want to get them excited for the next day!

During the rest of the week we hit rules and procedures hard, as they come up throughout the day. I don't do a PowerPoint and list off all our rules, what to do when you need a drink of water, or a pencil sharpened, I just pause what we're doing and talk about it throughout the day as we're transitioning into activities that require those things happening.

I also like to get a feel for where my students are at academically during this week. I do a fluency test with everyone, and give them their Beginning of the Year Math Screener (provided by my district) at the end of the week. This way I can start doing diagnostic assessments at the beginning of the following week if I have concerns about where a student is at, and they can get put into an appropriate group for their needs.

My favorite part about the first week of school is all the conversations that we start with our read alouds. I love First Day Jitters, Chrysanthemum, A Fine Fine School, What if Everybody Did That, The Dot, Ish, and The Recess Queen. These are great for setting the tone for the year and talking about rules together instead of listing the rules to students on Day 1.

Tips & Tricks: Be CONSISTENT. You're setting expectations for the whole year right now! Don't forget to do attendance by the time that your secretary asks it to be turned in. Set an alarm on your phone if necessary.. it's a little chaotic right at the beginning of the day! MODEL, MODEL, MODEL. Don't assume that your students will know how to put their supplies in their pencil box. Go through together how you want it to look like or you'll have a hot mess classroom in seconds.

- THE MOST IMPORTANT THING YOU NEED TO KNOW ON THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL IS HOW YOUR STUDENTS GET HOME. Make a list and check it twice. You must know how they get home from school!

The rest of the day needs to be focused on getting to know your students through get to know you activities and read aloud and procedures. Practice the procedures as many times as you can. And then practice them every day for the next few weeks. If they aren't meeting your expectations 100% make them try again.

- Fun, engaging get to know you activities are the best, it not only helps the kids know each other better but helps you know them better quickly as well; examples: "find someone who..." games, four corners, paper snowball fight where the students write something on paper and they get to throw it across the room and others pick it up and we try to guess who's paper it was.
- Some of my go to read aloud are "stick and stone", "giraffes can't dance" "the kissing hand" "tattle tongue". I make a list of all the transitions and procedures I want them to learn, and break them down over the course of a week. I add in some fun time. Always leave room for free choice or play time the first couple days, the little babes are SO tired!
- Set expectations. This goes on for the first couple weeks honestly. If you hit expectations hard in the beginning of the year, you don't have to spend valuable instruction time going over them again throughout the year. Yes, your students will need little reminders here or there but consistency is key!
- My first principal always told me that on the first day of school the goal is to get everyone in, get everyone fed, and get everyone home. I am a very structured teacher, but the first few days I tend to have some unstructured time so I can observe the students. What are the activities/items they choose to do? These things will be used to motivate and reinforce later. What types of personalities and friendship groups already exist? But this is also a time to TEACH and PRACTICE PROCEDURES.
- Focus on procedures for the entire week +. The more you focus on these at the beginning the less problems you will have the entire year. I also do a lot of getting to know you activities the first week. Things that make getting back into the groove of being at school easy.
- 1st day: welcome, couple of ice breaker games and get to know yous, go over expectations and schedule (push in/pull out guidelines too), pass out books, collect community classroom supplies, "first 10" or "first 20 days of school" unit my school does (I'm happy to share resources). Just remember to breathe and take care of your kids. Don't feel like you've got to have it all figured out or perfect. The kids don't know what you have or don't have planned, so if it doesn't go the way you planned... scrap it and move on. Reflect later.

- The first day of school can be scary for kids. I think the most important thing you can do is give them time to explore the new space, learn about you, and learn about each other. Spend the day doing ice breakers WITH your students. Set-up fun activities where they can learn about each other. Give them a scavenger hunt to learn about the different areas in your classroom, then at the end of the day send home all the paperwork! :)
- 1st day · sort through supplies, take a classroom tour and review expectations/procedures for each part of the classroom, fun get to know your teacher/classmates activities. 1st week · PROCEDURES! PROCEDURES! PROCEDURES! Practice everything as they would have to do it normally and practice over and over. Mix all of that in with fun activities.
- I make sure to take pictures of each child on the first day of school. It might sound easy, but can be super time consuming! I just think it means a lot to the parents to have a nice picture and it is so nice to look back at it at the end of the school year to see how much they have grown!
- I like to do fun get to know you activities. I always have an activity on the desks for when students enter. My students do not enter at the same time so this gives them something to do while I am welcoming students.
- I LOVE the first few days of school and all of the collaborative activities we do. My favorite activity has been doing a read aloud of *The Magnificent Thing* to kick off a growth mindset discussion & then I'll bring in a ton of recycled things that I collect prior to the start of school for each table group to brainstorm with and collaborate on building their Most Magnificent thing · it has to be some sort of connection to our flexible seating (i.e. lap desk, cup holder, VIP caddy, etc.)
- I spend the first days teaching routines. As a kindergarten teacher, this takes a LOT of time. Many of our students have never been in a school setting and we can't assume any of them understand or know how to execute our expectations. So I use a lot of guided exploration and direct modeling to teach, review, and reinforce expectations. This covers everything from sitting on the carpet, to getting in line, to using a crayon. I highly recommend the book "*The First Six Weeks of School*." It is from the Responsive Classroom people and it's fantastic whether you subscribe to other Responsive Classroom techniques or not. I also always try to remember that, especially in kindergarten and the same held true when I taught 1st grade as well, the class will not be exactly what I want it to be until around November. Then they become normal little humans and I am no longer just herding cats.
- The first day is dedicated to reviewing expectations and playing a few get-to-know-you games. The first week is dedicated to setting up materials, getting to know our classroom library, introducing and practicing procedures, and reviewing how to be a good reader.
- 1. lots of breaks, 2. firm with expectations from the beginning, 3. positive praise constantly!!!

How do you learn and remember all of the students' names?

- I do my best to memorize the list before meet the teacher so at that point I am just putting a face with a name. In elementary it's pretty easy because your classes aren't that big and you will be writing each name a million times with all of your labels.
- I have students introduce themselves to me on their way into the door. We play name games, do get to know you activities, and I challenge myself to get them all known by Friday. I end every day with me going around the room and trying to name them off. I just tell them that I make mistakes and ask if they'll forgive me and not make fun of me if I get it wrong (I'm hoping that they realize that that's how we'll treat them if they come up front and try things, but who knows).
- As soon as I get my class list I work on memorizing it alphabetically! I recite it to myself in the shower, while I'm brushing my teeth, and just get it habit so that I always have a quick run down of my kiddos in emergencies, during roll or when I need it! Once I put the faces to the names, it comes really naturally!
- There are a few different things I do...
 1. On the first day of school I play one of those silly name memorization games with my class. We sit in a circle and each person introduces themselves (one at a time) with an adjective that describes their personality, but also starts with the same letter (or sound) as their first name. I always go first with "Wacky Miss Whittaker." The student to my left then has to say my name and then introduce them self. At the very end I go around the entire circle and make sure I have everyone's first name. Not only is it a great way to get to know everyone's name right away, but it also starts to build classroom community from Day 1.
 2. I use popsicle sticks with students first and last names on them to help me solidify my name memorization. I use these sticks throughout the year to randomly call on students or put them in groups. During the first week while the students are working on an assignment, I pull out my sticks and randomly draw a name. When I know for sure who that particular student is I pull the next stick and repeat. Ones I get stumped on I put back in the pile and draw again.
 3. Towards the end of the year I try to start getting to know some of the students who will be coming to me next year so that I have a few names and faces connected to give me a head start.
- Wow I've never thought of this! I guess it just happens! You talk to them so much throughout the first couple days that you'll be shocked how quickly you learn their names! Don't be afraid to admit that you forgot their name and need a reminder! Students need to see their teacher make mistakes also!

- If the kids are working independently, I will walk around the room and say their names continuously in my head as I walk by, I try to use their names a lot the first 2 weeks as well.
- Name tags that the students can decorate & I have them say their name any time they are called on.
- The name tags on desks help me out TONS! Mostly because I learn where each student's spot is. With flexible seating this year, it was much more difficult because students weren't always in the same spot. It comes a lot faster than you think it will!
- I'm good with names and faces naturally, so really for me repetition and consistent seating helps in the beginning. I try to remember a hair style or something they were wearing so I can mentally link it to remember the student the next day.
- Carry a seating chart around with you and start calling on them by name from day 1. If you have access to your students' information and school picture before the first day, start looking at them and make yourself familiar with names/faces.
- Just keep practicing/looking at their names. Tell the kids ahead of time that you may not remember their names the first day and to have them be patient with you as you practice.
- Every year I still play the Circle Name Game. The first player says, Hi, my name is Addison. This second player says Hi, my name is Avery and this is Addison. By the time we get all the way around, I usually have it! An oldie but a goodie!
- I greet my students each morning at the door with a handshake, where we both say "Good morning (name)" to each other · this helps them to practice their real world social skills, especially maintaining eye contact! I actually have the kids line up outside the classroom and we practice on day 1 · I get to learn names fairly quickly this way!
- I start this process on Meet the Teacher night. As the students and their families are milling around the classroom, I continuously look around and repeat the students' names. The families get a laugh at me seeing how many names I remember. When the kiddos come in on the first day, I see how many I still remember as they walk through the door. My students' first activity when they arrive on the first day, after learning how to put their book bag away and unpack their things), is to color in a name tag I have printed for them on big labels. They wear these all day and I use their names as frequently as I can. I usually have it down by lunch time. But every year, there are at least 2 students whose names I mix up all year. They think it's hilarious.
- I have my students make and decorate name plates that stand up on their desks. I also have students wear name tags and we play fun, interactive games during the first week of school in order to help me and the other students learn each others names.

Lesson planning:

How far in advance do you plan?

- I TRY to plan 1-2 weeks in advance, but in reality, sometimes it ends up being the weekend before; I usually tried to at least have the large units planned out though very early in the year; I use planbook.com
- During the first week? I make a list of things I want to accomplish each day and it always ends up getting pushed back but that's because I teach and reteach and practice and reteach procedures. Otherwise I plan just one week in advance. Even those plans end up getting changed because of my students' needs. Usually I plan with my team on Tuesdays for the next week and then at the end of the week I change any plans as needed depending on how students did on assignments and what we got to.
- I'll plan the first two weeks of school ahead of time because we're not in our "routine" yet and haven't started hitting our curriculum hard. In the middle of Week 3 I'll start planning for Week 4. We have a grade level planning meeting 30 minutes every week, so we just check in that we're on the same story and finishing the same math assignments by the end of the week. I found that if I plan too far in advance things come up and I have to change them anyway, so planning 1 week ahead has been what works best for me.
- I make broad plans for units, holidays or big events but leave the detailed planning until 2 weeks before. So much can change!
- I do a year long scope and sequence that's a rough outline, then I do a plan unit by unit. I don't do my unit plan until like 3 weeks out from the unit. Then by every Tuesday, I have the following weeks plans done. So I technically plan pretty far out but it's a rough draft and flexible. The only hard deadline is the week in advanced.
- I try to have a general outline for the month and really specific 1 week in advance. Being a special education teacher, things have to be flexible for me.
- About a week out. but I have also been teaching for many years and despite changing from special ed to gen ed. a few years back, I know my curriculum well enough that I don't need to plan too far out. I also find that if I plan an entire month, something inevitably happens and changes my plans.
- 1-2 weeks depending on the unit and student understanding
- I like to keep a working 2-week tentative plan that I modify on Thursdays of every week. This way I am always looking at where I am headed and what I have covered.

- I plan weekly. Things happen, days change, it gets too tricky trying to plan weeks ahead. If you decide to change something in your plans you won't be upset you put too much time into it.
- A week! Maybe 2 weeks at most!
- I plan weekly with my team! We use a google doc to collaborate on and it has really made our team meetings more efficient.
- I have a monthly plan in mind. The plans on my desk are for the week. I still write up a daily plan since I teach three separate classes. this keeps me in check when all classes are not in the same spot.
- My team and I designate one day each week (usually a Wednesday) to sketch out plans for the following week to make sure we stay at about the same pace in line with our curriculum calendar.
- I try to plan a week out every weekend. I also have a layout of how I want the year to look big-picture wise: when our curriculum units change over, sight words, certain stations etc.
- I have long-range plans for the whole year that I make before school starts, so that I have a rough plan for what I'm going to teach when. On those plans, I make sure to incorporate school holidays, tests, and time for review before our state standardized test. On a weekly basis, I try to have my plans for the next week ready by Wednesday, so that I have time to prep any materials that I'll need for the next week's lessons.
- My team plans two weeks out. I am responsible for science and grammar/phonics. I usually plan a whole unit at a time (4-5 weeks).
- I like to plan at least 1-2 weeks in advance. However, if you have your curriculum, I recommend planning as much in advance as possible, which is what I plan to do this year. Planning can be very time consuming so it's best to get as much done now as possible.

What can I do as a new teacher that will help me feel more prepared day-to-day (not like I'm reinventing the wheel each day with lessons that are new to me)?

- Try to stay as organized as possible, keep labeled files, organize things on your computer, save everything you're doing this year for next year
- Work with your team!
- Breathe. This was one thing I didn't do and I was hurting. Take time to just chill out because if you're always doing work, you will be pouring from an empty cup. That being said, set deadlines for yourself. If you can go to a Together Teacher training or at least get the book, you will really see how to stay organized and not feel so all over the place. Make sure you're planning a week ahead or so, so that you can look over lessons and get materials prepared, etc. but you'll be more prepared than you think when it comes to your lessons.
- Ask your fellow grade level teachers what they do! If you have a planning time when another teacher is teaching, ask if you can observe them. Stay involved with our Instagram community as well! Find blogs that are similar to your teaching style and grade level(s). Honestly, your first year, you will likely feel as if you are flying by the seat of your pants everyday. But its ok. Consider keeping a teaching journal and reflecting day to day. What worked, what would you change, etc.?
- TpT can be your best friend! I purchase a lot from there because I know the lessons there are tried and true. This is also where I find a lot of lessons that are still the same concepts, but WAY more engaging for the students.
- Have people on your grade level share with you how they've taught the lesson in the past or ask for ideas to help spark some ways to best serve your kids. Plan ahead and stay organized. Gather materials at least 2-3 days ahead of time so you know what you have and what you still need. If your room is close by or connects to a neighboring teacher, see if you two can share supplies like a divide and conquer method.
- Make your copies and lesson plans a week ahead of time! Steal materials from your coworkers if they're willing to share. Check out packets from Teachers Pay Teachers to get quick-prep activities to supplement your curriculum. But most of all, just talk to your team and see what they're doing, and most likely they'll offer you materials to use.

- Collaborate!! Ask the other teachers that also teach your grade level what they are doing or have done. More than likely they are willing to share more with you than you need. But, make sure you are always also sharing ideas of your own.
- Take time to look through and learn the materials you are teaching before you plan. Find a way to organize your week and plan in advance to help you feel prepared.
- I plan a full week at a time a week prior to when I'm going to teach. This gives me plenty of time to look at the content for next week's lesson and create my lessons.
- If you have a mentor in your grade, there is no shame in doing what they are doing. Copy their lessons for the first few weeks (or months) and then when you start feeling comfortable change up one thing here and there to get the hang of everything.
- Find something to automate. Whether it is daily work, spelling homework..something. Those items that are automated keep students on a routine. They keep the class moving efficiently, that opens time for you to work on and present your core lessons.
- Rely on your team. Don't feel like you have to become this amazing Pinterest-inspired, blog-worthy teacher from day 1. The other teachers in your building have probably been doing this for a while. Find time to plan together and let them guide you along the way. As you get comfortable with your new curriculum and how things in your building work, you can begin to put your own spin and creativity into your lessons.
- I really recommend creating a long-term plan and then breaking your plans down into weeks. It will take more work at the beginning, but when you finish a day knowing what you will teach the next day, you will feel a million times better. Also, if you take the time to organize your digital and paper files, your future self will thank you because you won't have to reinvent the wheel the next time you teach that topic (or need to review something with a tutorial group).
- I review my lessons that I plan to teach, at least one day before I teach it. So that I'm comfortable with it and it helps me feel so much more prepared.

HOW DO YOU PLAN FOR THE WHOLE SCHOOL YEAR?

- Big year long bullets of holidays, thematic units, special lessons, then I take each month one at a time as they come!
- One day/ week at a time!
- Do a generic mapping out of units a couple weeks before you go back to school. Plug in which weeks you'll do certain word work, social studies units, etc. don't forget to plug in school holidays, student holidays/teacher work days, standardized testing dates, etc. collaborate collaborate collaborate! Don't do it alone because you are not alone. If you feel all caught up, work ahead so that you don't get behind later on when other things may make you busier than you realize. Don't forget too to throw in some fun stuff to do too!
- I just plan out the standards I want to teach throughout the year. I don't lesson plan until it gets closer to the time of teaching.
- My standards are considered my year long plans. I just try to break them up into sections.
- I have a planning page that I use to outline my district unit timelines and then match up writing projects, stations, sight words, etc. This is always done in pencil, because it always changes.
- Take your list of standards and a year-long calendar. Figure out when your students will be taking the standardized test, and plan backwards from there, ensuring that you leave time to review and reteach. Don't get into specifics, but instead just block off time to teach the different skills. This will help you make sure you're staying on track and are moving along at a pace where you will be able to teach everything.
- Like ahead of time? Don't! Your planning should be based on the needs of your students.

How do you lesson plan & make sure you fit in all of the standards?

- I backwards plan. So I create the assessments (or look at them if they are already created) first with questions that are aligned to the standards and then plan my lessons based on what students need to know in order to get to the end result. I really enjoy backwards planning because then I know I'm hitting everything I need to in order prepare the students for the next grade level of standards. It helps make sure there are no surprises when they get tested.
- You can't. Don't stress about trying to! You'll cover everything your students need to know.
- Our district provides pacing guides for all subjects, then we meet as a grade level to divide and conquer. 2 people per subject map out when we cover each unit and where the labs, assessments, etc fit in working around our standardized tests and other school interruptions. We have the standards printed out and highlight/check off as we map out each unit. Allow days/weeks for reteaching if necessary, or else you can bump up material depending on student achievement.
- Make a checklist which includes every standard that you need to cover, print it out, and highlight or check off the standard once you have covered it.
- Have a checklist for yourself of all math, ela, science, and s.s. standards. As you plan your lessons, check off the standards you use. That way it's easy for you to keep track of the standards used and unused.
- I plan monthly/weekly/daily. I have NEVER covered all of my standards. I do my best to get through as much as possible. I would rather my students learn what i do cover than simply check off standards to say that I covered them and my students not really learn anything.
- If your district has any sort of curriculum guidelines or learning maps or pacing guides, they were probably written to ensure all the standards get covered.

HOW DO YOU KEEP A LESSON ENGAGING?

- If you are excited about it, the kids will be excited about it (at least in the younger grades, that's how it usually works :))
- Keep them short & give the students lots of time to talk and move. I always have my kids turn and talk. This is a way for them to practice academic vocabulary and you can check for understanding.
- During a lesson I like keep students engaged by getting them to turn and talk to one another to answer a quick question or make a prediction. This causes them to take ownership of their learning and to make sure that they are paying attention. Some of my other engaging go-to's include cracking a joke, bursting out into song, or relating something back to my students lives and interests. Don't be so rigid with your lesson plan that you can't have an organic, teachable moment. Some of those most engaging and meaningful lessons are spontaneous.
- Know your students interests and incorporate them in the lesson, movement breaks (brain breaks) throughout the day, & be enthusiastic about what you're teaching. If you look or act bored teaching, chances are the students will vibe off that. Use a variety of check ins; cold call, turn and talks, peer discourse, etc. Strive for your lessons being more student driven (this takes time and practice but eventually students will do most of the talking and will be leading the lessons).
- Be creative, insert lots of humor, be overly dramatic, don't be afraid to have fun and be goofy!
- Use a little technology, buddy talk during lessons, hands on where appropriate, creating a product of some kind is helpful. Movement is key along with working with peers. I switch up lesson location when I can. Our media center has different zones where we can teach or use the outdoor classroom if you have one. Collaborate with school staff. I did a two day cooking demo lesson with our cafeteria staff to teach science and pull in a farm to table real world connection. The kids loved it and it got them in a new location!
- Find ways to use material and content that interests your students. Have them fill out student interest sheets, and use them. Keep them moving, laughing, and enjoying their learning.
- BE SILLY!! Kids love seeing their teacher dance, sing, rap...make learning FUN!
- Try to find some angle that peaks their interest. I am reading Teach Like a Pirate. It offers several strategies to help with this.
- By making sure the students are doing most of the work. When it is something that really has to be me talking, I have the kids turn & talk as much as possible.
- Make it fun! Make sure with any lesson you are doing, it involves the students talking to each other (turn and talks) and getting up and moving, not just sitting in one spot. I also like to incorporate things my students love into my lessons as well to keep their attention.

I'd love to hear how some teachers schedule their math block using small groups. I'm at a loss for what I should have my other students doing while I meet with small groups. Should I have them in rotations?

- Centers are great! However, I learned last year that math centers are something to be done maybe twice a week, not everyday; if you have a group of students who need small group math everyday try to find some fun engaging math games for the rest of the class.
- Yes to rotations. I always do math fact practice, problem of the day, whole group lesson, independent practice then stations. During independent practice and stations I pull small groups. Look at Reagan Tunstall's resources on guided math, that's where I get all of my stations, etc.
- What My co teacher did last year (she taught math, I taught reading) was she had a small group, a group on iReady (computers), a group doing math interactive notebooks and one doing math journals and then we would rotate. We had two blocks on this time during the day so she would see every group once a day.
- I LOVE rotations! One station can be computers, tablets (if you're lucky) and have students work on educational math websites. There are SO many activities that can be done in pairs/small groups where students can work together. Independent stations can also be students working on some worksheets to address their specific needs. This happens AFTER you teach your procedures for rotating, how to behave in centers, etc.
- I have a group with me (start with my lowest group and spend the most time going over the lesson with them again), the other groups are working on their math workbook, I have a technology station where they do an online math program, a worksheet/extra practice spot, math game spot, and sometimes I have an interactive notebook spot.
- I always have rotations going. It helps having another set of hands like a co-teacher or high school helper if you can. Find your "experts" to help guide groups that you're not meeting with. Have a technology station if you can. Keep stations short and to the point so the lesson isn't lost and behavior is at a minimum. Use a digital timer and have it on display like one from online stopwatch.
- My students rotate through math activities, partner activities, and technology. When the students finish their activities, I also have plenty of early-finisher activities available to them.
- I meet with one small math group per day while the rest of the students are at a math station. My groups are flexible based on our current math unit and who needs support or enrichment.

- I LOVE math rotations! I do math groups for 1 hour every day right after a 20 minute whole group mini-lesson to introduce the skill we're working on. After that I have 4 stations that reinforce what I just taught.

For example, today's mini lesson is two-digit addition. During my mini lesson we'll practice our strategies, do practice problems, and try to eliminate misconceptions before we begin our practice. Then I'll quickly introduce my four 15-minute long stations (some teachers do three 20-minute rotations, it's totally up to you. I like having 4 stations so that my groups are smaller.). Station 1 I'll have my struggling students go right to the teacher table and I'll help them with our worksheet that I just got finished reviewing in our mini lesson. We probably won't finish it, but that's fine! As long as the kids are working hard for 15 minutes, whatever we get done is enough. Station 2 I'll have kids on an iPad doing an addition game. Station 3 will be some sort of addition game. You can do addition fact war, roll to 100 with dice, Toothy addition from @LuckyLittleLearners, etc. Station 4 I'll have students on a laptop playing another addition game. I know that not all of you have access to this technology in your room, so I have some of my other favorite resources below.

Math Apps: Todo Math, Meteor Math, Academy, Box Drop Math

Math Websites: turtlediary.com, abcya.com, pbskids.org, funbrain.com, sheppardsoftware.com, coolmath-games.com

Non-technology Resources:

Daily Math Worksheet (We call it monkey math because it has a little monkey on the page. I can't find the link on TpT right now, but any daily activity bundle is probably good!)

Apple Core Math (<https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Store/Hoppe-Daze>) I LOVE these! They are challenging and write problems in the same format as our district's end of year assessments so the students aren't thrown for a loop when our curriculum says things like "Ten rods" and the test says "Ten sticks."

Think Tank Box from Origo (search on Amazon) You can probably get these elsewhere, but this is great for fast finishers, and to give gifted students a challenge!

Anything with dice or cards. Look on Pinterest for ideas with these, because usually they're low/no-prep and the kids have so much fun!



Behavior & Classroom Management

HOW DO YOU KEEP FIRM, ESPECIALLY DURING THE FIRST WEEK, YET LET THE STUDENTS KNOW YOU LOVE THEM?

- You just have to keep reminding yourself that it's easier to be nicer and more lenient later in the year than try to be more strict later on.
- It's more important to be firm! Give your kids a hug and tell them you love them out the door. Read them books and tell them personal things about yourself. But when they don't meet your expectations let them know and then make them fix it. Don't let your students get away with anything!
- In my opinion, your tone is everything. Be firm, but kind. When I see or hear something that's "wrong" I stop and talk about it. There aren't necessarily consequences right off the bat, but I let them know that what they're doing is not okay and they need to stop. I also really compliment the positive behaviors I see. "I LOVE how respectfully Johnny is sitting on the carpet!" "Look how quickly Sally put her materials away and is waiting patiently for directions!" Things like that make the students feel good, and the rest of them (usually) try to mimic the behavior to earn a compliment too. I think at the end of the day, your students are going to respect you for holding them to high expectations and know that you follow through with them.
- By staying consistent, leading by example and by using positive language and reinforcement.
- I read the Teach Like A Champion book and there is a chapter about Warm Strict. It's all about your tone. I also whispered a lot with my first graders. I tried really hard (and it got better throughout the year) to never raise my voice. If I was frustrated or needed to be firm, I actually got quieter and used a strict tone. This made it so students had to really listen to what I had to say and they responded better to the controlled sound of my voice. I highly suggest reading that book!
- I will never yell or embarrass a student. If necessary I will speak to them outside. It is important to explain why there are rules and procedures, otherwise there is no buy in. Always give students a chance at redemption. Also, I put the responsibility on the student (I know you can do better, please show me what you know how to do). Give students an opportunity to explain their side and apologize if you were wrong. Don't stay mad and hold grudges.
- Firm first, then soften. That way they know you mean business. You can always become "nicer" but becoming more firm is not really something you can do while having the students respect and listen to you.

- I go over expectations, cut up a little bit with a meme reference or a dance move. I let them know we are a family and that there are peaks and valleys in families. We take care of each other, I'm their "school mom" and I'm always here for them. I'm quick to show grace and kindness, but have a limit. It's more of just them knowing that I'm human too and that I'll be there for them 100% in good or bad.
- Stick to procedures and expectations but tell kids that you're proud of them for listening, etc. (positive reinforcement).
- This is something that I am still working on going into my second year!! I don't think there will ever be an "easy" answer to this.
- We talk and share about our lives. I try to give them positive quotes to think and respond to. I let them know that setting goals is important right now even in elementary school. I try to enforce my rules consistently and fairly. I think this key in letting everyone know that you mean business but at the same time you have their best interests at heart. I usually give an abbreviated punishment the first week. I start enforcing full punishments the following week.
- I simply tell my students that I care about them and their progress, therefore the standard will be held high for them and that my expectations are especially high since they are the oldest in our elementary school in grade 5. I acknowledge and highlight good behavior as much as possible that first week, so the students know what the expectation is.
- This is a hard question to answer. Children want discipline and order, even when they don't seem to. By setting and holding your students to expectations, you are showing them how much you love and care about them. Listen to them. Hug them. Laugh with them. Get to know them. You can be firm without being mean.
- I am very clear with expectations but also give lots of positive praise. If someone is not meeting an expectation, I will praise someone who is. That usually fixes it. I use class dojo and give LOTS of green points the first week. I try really hard not to give any red points the first few days, but I will say, "that would be a red point." When I do start giving red points, I make sure to not make a big deal about it, and be very calm so students learn not to overreact to the negative feedback.
- Make sure you are consistent with your rules and routines! Don't make any exceptions for anyone so that your students know that you are serious about what is expected of them. To me this is the best way to effectively manage a classroom. Remember, consistency is key!

What kind of behavior management system do you recommend or use? What tips do you have?

- I recommend doing an individual, team based, and whole group; it sounds like a lot but I've used that and it has worked wonderfully!!! They are learning to behave not only for their own benefit but for their friends' too.
- I personally don't like the clip chart. I don't think it works for the kids that really need the behavior support. I have a behavior calendar in their home folders. If a student is misbehaving I give them a warning. If they do it again, I say, "Johnny, you need to go put your folder on my desk." That's his way of knowing the behavior needs to change and a reminder to me that he is on check. At the end of the day, we talk about the behavior and see if the student has fixed the behavior. If he did, great, he gets a sticker. If not, I put a note in the folder for tomorrow.
- My first year I used a clip chart (that allowed students to bump up to super or down to parent contact) and classroom money. The kids were really motivated to bump up to purple, and loved earning rewards with their money like lunch in the classroom. I had students color in a behavior calendar to get initialed every night, and if they ended up on green, blue, or purple they were invited to our Star Party to eat lunch in the classroom and watch a movie at the end of every month. This year I'm keeping the clip chart, but doing Brag Tags instead of classroom money. I like how the rewards are specific, and they have something more tangible that they can be proud of and continue to improve. I think that whatever you decide to do, find ways to reward the positives, and be consistent and fair with the negatives. Make sure that the consequence is appropriate for the behavior!
- I don't have a clip chart and am very against public display of behavior. I have a cool down corner for kiddos that feel really emotional, have made a poor choice or just need to take a minute and chill out. I give our brag tags to recognize individual positive behavior and we earn parties as a class for positive whole group behavior. My biggest recommendation is to consider the kiddos who aren't behaving the best and try to get to the root of the problem. In my experience, there's something deeper chasing them to consistently act out/not contribute/etc.

- Last year I used a clip chart because that's what the school used. I didn't like it much, but I had to do what I was required to do. I printed out stop signs that said "stop what you're doing and make a better choice". Students got three stop signs before they had to move their clip. If a student made a horrible choice like hitting a student, bullying, breaking materials, etc. they moved their clip immediately to a 1, and parents were notified. This kept the clip chart effective because I wouldn't move the kids to a 3 or below unless it was serious or it was a repeated negative behavior. BUT if they got to a 4 or a 3, they were able to show me they could fix it and move back up. 2 or a 1, they were not allowed to move back up.
- This is my area of strength and expertise. I have taught many demographics and grades and behavior management is everything. Regardless of whatever specific system you use, it must be antecedent based, environmental modification based, and positively reinforcing. This means your classroom environment should be designed in such a way that most behavioral issues won't even occur. By having structure and clear expectations that eliminates a large portion of issues. Students need to know what to do and how to do it. In addition, wanted and desired behaviors should be acknowledged and rewarded frequently. Call attention to what you want to see and what people are doing right, not what students are doing wrong. I personally use a token economy in my classroom. Students can turn in their "bulldog bucks" for all kinds of rewards · most of which are free to me. Rewards can be line leader for the day, teacher helper, a homework pass, lunch with the teacher, an extra snack, a computer/iPad break, etc. I hand out the bucks for positive behavior and positive character traits. This is also great if its during a time when only a couple of students are doing what they are supposed to be doing. I won't say a word and will just start passing out bulldog bucks and immediately other students catch on.
- I personally LOVE ClassDojo. I have used it in both special education and general ed. My school uses clip charts as a part of our PBIS plan, but I am not a fan of students seeing that all day long. I would be MORE than happy to talk to anyone more about ClassDojo if there is interest.
- I tried the clip chart for fifth grade my first year and half of my second... didn't work for me, but it may for you. I've had the best luck with 2 things: a bingo board and class dojo. Since our school mascot is a tiger, I made a TIGER BINGO board. Students can write their name in any blank box on that board. Friday's I draw one-two spots and whichever student names are there they get candy. You can tweak the reward of course. I have had great response to the class dojo app with kids and parents. Of course it doesn't work for every student... but for the most part it does. I'm quick to give points rather than take away to ensure it is more of a positive behavior management system.

- Let me start by saying that the best behavior management technique is for your students to always be actively engaged. If they are busy learning and exploring, there is little time for undesired behaviors. There should always be something for them to do, from the moment they walk through your door. The more hands-on and cooperative or collaborative, the better. That being said... For years I used a color clip chart. I liked the idea of students being able to move up and down throughout the day. However...in reality, I found myself using it more for the negative behaviors and I hated that walk of shame when someone had to clip down. And when I wanted to reward several people at once, it took forever for everyone to move their clips. Then I found ClassDojo. Total game changer. Now I can easily reward as many people as often as I want! And I rarely use it for negative behaviors. You can set your own behaviors and then reward individuals or groups. And my parents LOVED it. It also lets me text parents without giving out my cell number and has a "stories" component that is like a FB page for your class and students can have individual portfolios as well. It really made such a difference in my relationships with families because they felt like they got a daily glimpse into the classroom. Whatever management system you choose, the most important thing is to be consistent and to focus on positive behaviors, while having clear and logical consequences for negative behaviors. I also suggest limiting extrinsic rewards. My students work towards being among the first to choose their free play centers at the end of the day (they pick in order of Dojo points earned), rather than prizes or stickers. They learn that children who make positive choices earn privileges not prizes.
- If you are a departmentalized teacher, I highly recommend being on the same page as your partner teachers so that the students always know what to expect. My partner teachers and I share clipboards that rotate with each group of students. On this clipboard, we keep track of students who had no homework, no planner signature, who were late/absent, and who got a behavior mark. We mark students for talking, being unprepared, being disrespectful, or being disruptive. Each student starts off with a verbal warning, and after that they move seats to sit by themselves, have a personal conference with the teacher, have a parent notification, or have an office referral.
- I started using class dojo 2 years ago and I love it!
- I use a clip up Behavior chart and I apply a ticket system along with it. I assign each color a certain number of tickets and depending on where the students land at the end of the day, that's how many tickets they receive. On Fridays, students turn their tickets in and I draw names for treasure box! This has worked so well in my classroom!

- I use a clip system in my classroom because it's school expectation. Instead of correcting/focusing on students doing the wrong thing, call out kids doing the right thing and make a BIG deal of their good choices in behavior. This usually helps the kids doing the wrong thing get back on track because they want to be called out/get clip moved up. Once you see those kids change their behavior to the positive choice, call them out/talk to them privately and make a big deal of their good choices.
- I used a clip chart and it was overwhelming for me and but the parents liked it so I couldn't stop. I will not be doing anything too special, just following BIST to the book with safe seats and buddy rooms. I will also use behavior plans for students who need that support.
- I love Dojo. Parents can access it from their phone and know exactly what is going on. There are printable reports to be sent home or used in conferences. You can also reward students for points or percentages.
- I really love using Class Dojo for individual and team points. You can group your students into their table groups, where they can earn individual points by working as a team. I switch their table groups each month, and it's easy to swap out their groups on Dojo. In the first week of school, we brainstorm a list of behaviors that students can earn points for and ones that will result in a deduction of points - they will really own it if they are part of creating it! In addition to Dojo, I have a whole class incentive with the marble jar. I start with a relatively easy to achieve goal, such as 20 marbles. Whenever I notice the class jiving well or all working collaboratively in an effective way, I'll make a big deal about it and ask our class marble keeper (one of my class jobs) to add a marble to the jar. They can also lose marbles, but I try not to do that too often unless it is really the only option.

Why are behavior charts viewed so negatively?

- Usually because something is being taken away; positive behavior systems focus on if a student has earned something for good behavior, it should never be taken from them because they did something to earn it.
- It feels like public shaming to me. I feel like behavior is a private conversation between me and my students!
- I'm not sure I understand which charts we are talking about. I don't think charts are viewed negatively if they are used in the correct way, but some teachers misuse them (if we are talking about clip charts or cards, etc.). This is another thing that if you have a strong philosophy about a behavior management system you use and it works for your class, keep using it. Some however, may not work and you have to tweak it or find something else completely. The way I used my clip chart was completely different than the way a second grade class used theirs. You set expectations, and you remain consistent.
- It puts a child on public display to their peers, many younger students can't fully grasp the concepts of it, and many people abuse them i.e. putting a kid straight on red.
- I think because you tend to see the same kids near the top and the bottom which is on public display. I did mine with student's numbers (not their ID number). Eventually the kids learn who is who with numbers and can tell you almost better than you who is on yellow, orange and red. Use at your discretion or another method.
- I think it is charts that are public. We use personal behavior charts for students who need that support, but we don't embarrass them by calling them out in front of the class.
- I use Dojo but I do not display it for the whole class to see. It is on my phone not the promethean board. I think that just keeps it private and not for the world to see.
- Because it is SO hard to remember to reward the good kids, but REALLY easy to tell those misbehavers to clip down, no matter how great you think you are going to be at it. I always refer to it as the "walk of shame." Plus, they are out in the open for the whole class to see. They know who the kids are that are always on red. Parents can walk in your classroom and see how everyone is behaving as well. I used one for years but was always uncomfortable with it. Look into the ClassDojo app.

What kind of procedures and routines should I have ready and how do I best teach them?

- For Elementary, you need a routine and procedure for just about everything. How we come in in the morning, how we walk in the hall, how we go to lunch, what to do if we have to go to the bathroom, pencils, school supplies, electronics, homework policy, emergencies, noise levels, etc. Don't be overwhelmed! This is YOUR room. How do you want it to be done? Think about it. Truly picture it. Then, when the first few days of school come model it to your students. Have them practice. If it's not how you want it, then practice again. Later in the week revisit so that it's solid!
- You need a procedure and routine for EVERYTHING. From how students enter your room, to where they put materials, how they handle pencils, bathroom procedures etc. Practice practice practice. Create visuals and anchor charts for the most prominent procedures.
- You do what works best for you and your students. Always follow school procedures but make some fun special rules for your classroom. It helps build culture and community within your room. Start from day one and be consistent. If you team teach or co teach, make sure you're on the same page and work out a system.
- It's up to how you want to run your classroom but it's beneficial to have procedures/routines for everything; even things you wouldn't think of! How do you want students to ask to use the bathroom, get a book to read, sharpen their pencil, ask for an eraser, get markers, throw away trash, answer questions, etc. Search online for lists to help you get started. You may think of new procedures/routines as the year begins and that's okay. It's your classroom, you can also change/add new routines.
- Procedures for everything!!!! collecting papers, picking up computers, going to the bathroom, lining up for lunch.....EVERYTHING! I usually teach them as we go.....I explain lunch procedures as we are going to lunch. Just allow time to do so.
- The best way to teach routines is through interactive modeling. Model the behavior/routine exactly the way you want students to do it. Then ask students what they noticed. Next have a few students try to do it and again ask the class what they noticed. Then everyone tries as you observe and coach. You can google interactive modeling for more info. Think about everything your students will need to do/use throughout the day. If there is a specific way you want them to do it, you need to model it. For younger students, that includes everything from sitting on the carpet, to getting and walking in line, to using a crayon box.
- A great resource for this is "The First Six Weeks of School"
- At the beginning, I recommend having routines for: restroom, water, nurse, library, transitioning, taking tests, partner work, group work, read-alouds, and independent work.
- Lining up, call to attention, moving in room (desk to rug, desk to line, etc.), morning routine, end of day routine (packing up, dismissal, etc.) &, getting/using materials

parent contact:

How do I handle making sure the students' parents feel comfortable with me as a first-year teacher?

- Let them know you are one and how excited and qualified you are - even as a newbie you are more qualified than they are. This is your classroom and you earned that degree. Listen to your parents, incorporate ideas and make them feel apart of your class without you feeling overwhelmed with their participation. I do a daily email that reminds parents of approaching events, a quick blurb about what we did in each subject and homework if applicable. I have gotten GREAT feedback from parents with this. I also use class dojo to post pics of labs or quick STEM lessons we do at least once a week so parents feel like they're apart of their kid's day. You can post on the class feed or individual student pages. Just make sure you have a photo release form for each student.
- I was nervous about this because I'm young, but I look even younger (I still get the high school discount at my local coffee shop!). When parents hear "First Year Teacher," sometimes they get anxious, because they don't know what to expect. So I didn't advertise that I was a first year teacher anywhere. On my meet the teacher letter, I wrote "This is my first year at abc elementary school" and talked about how excited I was for the kids. If someone asked me about it, I was honest, but I only had 2 parents ever bring it up at the beginning of the year. I think all that they care about it that you love their kid and make their time at school worthwhile. I started my year by sending home positive emails every day until I had one to every parent. I think that showing them that I was willing to celebrate the little things (Aidan shared his paints with a friend who didn't have any, yay!) it showed the parents that I actually paid attention to their child and cared about what they were doing throughout the day. If they ever asked me something that I didn't know about, I would say, "You know what, let me think about that and I'll get back to you," that way I had time to find an answer instead of saying "I don't know." If they can tell that you care about their students, most of them won't give you any trouble.
- Confidence is key. You will hear "oh you're a first year teacher?" many, many times. Keep your head held high and be professional. You shouldn't feel like you need to "handle" how parents feel about you, just do your thing! Some things that helped start relationships with my parents early on: sending home a get to know your teacher sheet, sending home a parent questionnaire, and continually keeping the door for communication open.
- I wouldn't let that be your worry! Just work and do what you do and they will probably forget it's your first year at all! Most parents were totally receptive/didn't really care that I was a first year teacher.

- COMMUNICATION! Show them you know what you're talking about; I know it's easier said than done but don't let them know you're nervous; be honest with them too, they'll respect you for that
- Honestly that's not your problem, there will always be parents that have problems with everything. When you meet them, introduce yourself and answer any questions they have. If you don't know the answer just say "that's a great question, I am not sure of the answer but I will contact you as soon as it's answered" then write it down and write down their contact information and FOLLOW THROUGH. Contact parents for positive praise regularly so that you can develop rapport with parents. They will love you when they realize how much you love their child!
- This was something that I was concerned about too! I've realized that as long as I looked pulled together and projected kindness, warmth, and confidence when meeting my students and their parents I would be just fine.
- Honestly, most parents won't even know. My parents never asked me or questioned me. I'm honestly pretty sure that the only parent that knew I was a first year teacher was the parent volunteer and that was because we talked often and it came up in conversation. I didn't HIDE it from parents, but it was information that wasn't necessarily being shared unless they asked. As long as you are supporting their student and communicating with the family professionally, there should be no concern!
- Again, fake it till you make it! You have to convey yourself as a competent, confident, and assertive adult. You don't need to shout from the roof top that you're a first year teacher, but it is nothing for you to be ashamed of. Focus on the positives - you're fresh in the field! You are filled with the latest information, pedagogy, and curriculum information, you are full of energy and optimism!
- DON'T TELL THEM YOU'RE A FIRST YEAR TEACHER. Just tell them it's your first year teaching at the school and that you've previously taught wherever. You student taught.
- Keep them informed! Weekly newsletters and emails that recap the week are great. Posting pictures somewhere that parents have access to also keeps them in the loop.
- It's all about confidence. Even if you have to fake it during Meet the Teacher or Open House, just give them the impression that you know what you're doing. While it's inevitable that they will know it's your first year, don't dwell on it. And if someone asks you a question you don't know the answer to, focus on being "new to the building" rather than "it's my first year" when you tell them you'll find out and get back to them.
- Fake it until you make it! Even if you don't feel confident, act and speak confidently. Over time, you will feel more comfortable. I also wouldn't advertise that you are a first year teacher to your students or your parents. If they ask, don't lie, but also don't make a big deal out of it.

How do you handle parents making comments about it being your first year?

- Honestly, just ignore it, don't take it to heart, you know you are good, you know you know what you're talking about, just prove it to them.
- I've never had that problem! I let my work speak for me.
- Honestly, the parents I've had my first few years of teaching have been extremely supportive! Think about when you go to the Doctor's office. Do you want to see a Dr. who has been practicing medicine for decades but isn't up to date with best practice, or do you want to see the Dr. who's straight out of Med school and on the cutting edge of health care? Most parents who I've interacted with were excited that I was fresh out of college because they knew that I truly knew what I was doing because I had a fresh new education, that I was excited, and that I was dedicated to having a good experience.
- I never had parents make comments. So much in fact, I don't think most of them knew it was my first year. If you are supporting their students and communicating well with the family, there will be no comment-making. I think if a parent did make a comment to me, I would probably just assure them that I have their student's best interest in mind and at heart and that even though I may be a first year teacher, I am confident in my abilities. You must come off confident and composed, as well as professional.
- Ignore. Honestly, I never had that issue, but I would ignore it. It won't help anything to respond in any way.
- Let them know you understand their concern, but assure them that you are going to make it a great year for their child. Don't sound like you're better than veteran teachers, but in a way "brag" that you know the latest terminology and strategies being fresh out of college. You are surrounded by a great grade level and that you all work together to make sure each _____ grader gets the same successful experience. If you need back up, get an admin to sit in on your parent meeting or phone call. Ask a mentor teacher college professor for advice. If you're an especially young female, borrow some pearls and dress a little older (mature) to help with the visual aid. Whether you know what you're doing or not... always act like you are killing it! (Because more than likely, you are)

- Talk to an administrator about how to handle that. I wouldn't go straight to a parent for fear of them seeing it as an attack.
- I would try to not let it frazzle you. You have to start somewhere, right? Just stay positive. The first year is HARD. Do not think that it won't be. There is a learning curve. I've been teaching 24 years...there is a learning curve every year because you have a new set of students. What works one year may not work the next. First year teachers work very hard! Amaze them with your AWESOMENESS!
- I would answer with excitement. "Yes. I've worked really hard, had a great experience student teaching, and am so excited to work with you and your child this year!"
- I did not tell my parents or my students that it was my first year of teaching. I just didn't mention it and surprisingly none of my parents asked me that question. I thought it was best to not mention it because I didn't want the parents to misjudge me.
- My first year I only had positive comments from parents about me being a 1st year teacher! Parents were excited for their child to have the teacher fresh out of college with new exciting and creative ideas! It actually wasn't until my 2nd year that I had a parent throw "not having experience" in my face ... but ironically the issue she was attacking me over was something my "more experienced" team had told me to do and I was actually doing a lot more to help her kid than any of the other teachers said they would have. The parents that send crazy late night emails and fight you at every turn are going to do so no matter how much experience you have. If anything I'd say the parents will try to push or question you more as a first year teacher to see if they can get their way — just be confident and stand your ground — and find a teammate to proof read all of your not so fun emails.

What is the best way to communicate with parents for students with special needs?

- Communicate with them in the way they are most comfortable. You will want to develop rapport right away!
- However the parent prefers. It is best to always use district approved communication methods. I frequently text parents, but you always want to make sure that any communication is documented. If its phone calls, keep a log of the time, who you spoke to, and some general notes about the conversation.
- Newsletter. I used to send home a daily note each day in my self contained room. I had a form where I just circled things and then added a quick personalized message at the end. (I also created a daily "here's what we did today" paper that the students filled in and then I wrote my message on at the end.)
- However that parent best responds. Communication is better than none. Try all your options always so that you know you did your best in contacting them. Phone calls, face to face if they can, email, class dojo, administrator involvement for support and outreach too.
- As often and as gently as possible.

HOW DO YOU MAKE A POSITIVE IMPACT ON PARENTS? HOW DO YOU DEAL WITH CHALLENGING PARENTS?

- Communication is the most important thing, most parents just want to be kept in the loop. With challenging parents: stay polite and make sure you let your principal know because as long as they know they can help you.
- I have an open door policy and have lots of communication! Inviting them in to be a part of their child's learning really allows them to feel good about you and what their kiddos are doing each day! My best advice for dealing with challenging parents is to call them for good things and not just bad — and document everything!!
- Start off first day calling/ contacting as many as you can. Even if the kid was not so great that day, say they were excellent! That student will think you're nuts because they were bad and you said nothing but great things to their parent. Ron Clark has a book (Essential 55) that discusses this method more in depth. It's totally worth getting the book!
- Class dojo works for me in helping parents feel apart of our classroom experience. They love the positive posts and pics. I randomly post on their child's account or send a quick email to their parent bragging about what a great day they had or the random act of kindness they did when they thought no one was looking. It's quick and easy to get in a rut of contacting the same parents for negative things; be sure to balance it out by sending positive messages too. I also do a daily email where I give a quick run down on what we did that day and reminders for upcoming events. Parents have given great feedback with this because they aren't always home when their child is, it helps them remind their child of what's coming up, allows for dialogue about their day at the dinner table when some kids say they did "nothing" at school today, etc. Challenging parents may stay challenging or they may digress with time. You should never be harassed or humiliated by a parent. Get admin involved immediately if this were to happen. Sometimes they want to see what you're made of, other times they may not realize they're challenging. Keep admin aware and use your resources ·team teacher, co teacher, mentor teacher, etc. the more people that work with this child the better because you're all advocates for each other in defense to this challenging parent.
- All parents just want to hear about their kid and the classroom. Send out a weekly email/newsletter keeping the parents apprised on what's happening. For challenging parents, hear them out and see what you can do to put out any fires/calm them down. Most likely, parents are upset due to a misunderstanding.

- Talk to them. Let them know that you are on their side. That you want what is best for their child. That you understand how hard parenting is. I think we can isolate parents sometimes when we expect them to be perfect. Parents will forget things. Kids will miss homework and assignments. I think parents like to know that you live in the real world too. That we are going to work together as a team.

- I call every parent in the first week of school (I try to do as many as possible the first 2 days) to let them know what a great first day/week their child had and to see if they have any questions. Call the parents of those kids you know will be a challenge early so that they get a positive call from you before you start calling for other reasons.

At Meet the Teacher and Open House I stress the importance of communication and let the parents know that we will best serve their child by working together, I tell them honestly that there will be times when they may disagree with me, but to please talk to me when that happens. I let them know how much I love my job and their children. This goes a loooooong way to getting them on my side. I also promise to believe 80% of what the kids tell me about what goes on at home if they'll promise to do the same about what they hear about school. This always gets a laugh.

I have a few events during the year when I invite parents into the classroom. I think it's important for them to feel welcome in my room. I have a fall festival (some sort of craft), Thanksgiving Feast, Gingerbread House making, Winter Book Snuggle, and a Readers' Theater. Families are also invited in every week to be Mystery Readers.

I use ClassDojo as a communication tool. My parents LOVE it. The Class Stories let my parents feel like they got a daily glimpse into our room. And I can text parents without having to give out my cell number. I think parents like that familiarity and feeling like they can get a hold of me when needed. (I do set "office hours.")

For challenging parents, it's all about focusing on their child. Let them feel that you are really listening to them. Try to compromise when possible, but never forget that you are the professional. And don't be afraid to ask admin for help with a parent. That is their job.

- I have loved the parent communication side of class dojo. I can send whole class announcements, but I can also send notes, photos and files to one parent. Parents love hearing nice things about their kids! Make sure you either make a positive phone call or send a positive dojo message/email to every parent during the first week of school. This will really set you up for success. I have found that most challenging parents are just concerned about their kid. Let them know that you like their kid and have their best interest at heart.

- I love to make phone calls and keep parents informed on how their child is doing and also express any concerns. I also send home a weekly newsletter which showcases what we are doing in class, parents love it! If a parent is giving you a hard time, seek advice from your administration and mentor. They are really insightful and can really offer great support.

How do you wrap your head around meeting with parents, how do you plan?

- Just be confident and trust in yourself, ask your team for advice, talk to their previous teacher if you're worried about meeting with them.
- ALWAYS ask before meeting what the meeting will be regarding — frame it as a "could you please let me know what you'd like to discuss so that I may have everything I need ready for our time together" type thing.
- Sign up genius is a huge help and one we use school wide for conferences twice a year. For that I do student led conferences with their data notebooks. Constant contact with parents helps eliminate their "need" for meetings as often. Never turn away a parent that wants to meet with you. If you're worried about them being high maintenance or challenging, don't meet with them alone. Pull in an admin or counselor to be a witness and second voice in your favor.
- Have a print out of the student's grades with you in the meeting. If you have taken any notes on the student's behavior, also have that with you.
- Take time before the meeting to learn who will be at the meeting (one parent, both, are they together?), look over notes on the student, and their grade. Also, know why the meeting was called (did the parent set it up, did the teacher set it up, is it for grades, for behavior?, etc)
- When I meet with parents I use this system: glow, grow, glow. First, tell a positive comment about their child, then tell them something their child can work on and how they can help at home/how you're helping in the classroom, and end with another positive comment. I follow this system for emails, phone calls, conferences, etc.
- I over-prepared for conferences by having a sheet where I wrote out all of my talking points before hand. It was so time consuming but it made my conferences go so smooth! I will do it again this year!
- I try to have documentation...copies of work, grades, behavior reports. Hand written observations of things to discuss. Parent meetings can be overwhelming. Just come prepared and always start with a positive comment about the child.
- This depends on what the meeting is about. Just go in knowing your purpose and the main points you'd like to get across. Have concrete examples ready to back up your point. But be prepared to listen to the parents' concerns as well.
- Start with the positive! Make sure you have something positive to share about each kid. Also make sure that you are not just delivering bad news with no action plan. Let the parent know what you are going to do to help and what they can do to help. Don't leave them feeling helpless!

organization:

HOW DO YOU SET UP YOUR CLASSROOM?

- I started with the theme I wanted and went from there, Pinterest is a big help if you're trying to do a theme, and of course TPT.
- This is a broad question but I always set up my classroom library first because that's the most important thing. Then I set up my horseshoe table that I use for small groups and my desk. Make sure that when you are at your desk/horseshoe table you would be able to see students no matter where they are, whether it is at a table, desk, carpet etc. That way you can monitor them during small group time!
- I like to start setting up my classroom by getting all my furniture in place. Get all the big stuff out of the way so that you can start figuring out how you want the "flow" of your classroom to go. Where do you want students to put their stuff? Where do they turn things in? Where do they go during read aloud? Figure out how you want the movement in your room. Set up your bulletin boards depending on where you want your kids for things. I like to make sure I have: Student work spaces, Morning/End of day meeting area, Read aloud area, Whole group instruction area, Small group teaching area. After I do all these things, it's time to decorate! :)
- I set mine up to have lots of free space! I was of the mindset, the less the better!
- Bulletin board for each subject, table groups, defined group spaces (guided reading, independent work, computers and rug time), and a teacher station. I also put a ton of student work and anchor charts up.
- I set it up how it works best for me. I use flexible seating so there isn't much to set up. The students do the set up when they choose their spots each day that work best for them.
- I am a fan of flexible seating, however it does not work for all students which is why I keep at least 2 tables and chairs of traditional setting. I make the white board and projector portion of my room the focal point since I use that the most. I move my furniture around throughout the year as I see fit. My teacher desk is used but off to the side in a corner so it's out of the way. Supplies are in easy access for students.
- I use regular desks and set them up in groups of five or six but I leave an open space in the front of the room for read alouds.
- I have cooperative learning groups for seating. Once the assignment is given, students may sit anywhere in the room. Students often work with an assigned learning partner for certain assignments. These are assigned based on behavior and academic levels.

HOW DO YOU ORGANIZE YOUR LESSONS AND PAPERS?

- Lessons I use planbook.com, papers I use color coded file folders and make sure I label everything.
- I have a drawer for M-F that I put my copies in. I also have an extra drawer at the bottom that I put any copies I didn't get to in. If I need emergency sub plans I grab those papers!
- I created a binder that I use to store my lessons/ important paperwork. For my student's papers I purchased a bin that opens/closes with a latch. I can stash things in there that I need to take home and have it all in one spot.
- I do the sliding 3 drawer trays and label to organize copies and papers per subject, however I'm going to try the Monday-Friday concept this year. My lessons are typed up in a generic template. I keep it open in a window so that I can quickly access links if necessary and I have a printed copy sometimes on my desk for quick reference.
- I organize my papers and lessons by keeping my week's materials in a plastic paper organizer. I have one slot for each day of the week, so it's easy for me to find, or direct a sub to if I'm gone! We are required to have digital lesson plans, so I always have them running in the background, but I like to print a copy and have them on a magnet on my whiteboard to hand to my principal when he comes in for observations. I keep a separate plastic drawer organizer for papers that have been turned into me by students. Once I collect it from the turn in basket, it goes in the "To Grade" drawer. If it's too full, I know it's time to grade! ;) I have an "In Progress" drawer that I put the papers I'm in the middle of grading (usually when I forget the kids at Music and have to dash down the hall to pick them up). This makes it easier to pick up where I left off. Finally, I have a "To Enter" drawer, where I put the graded work that needs to be entered on our online grade book. Once it has been entered, it goes in student mailboxes to go home.
- Lessons · planbook.com Papers · I have a rainbow 10-drawer cart that I use to sort papers by day of the week, those that need to be copied, those that need to be sent home, etc.
- I use Google Drive to organize things electronically, and as I print things out to make copies, I create file folders to organize the hard copies. For example, when I'm teaching figurative language, I have a file folder labeled "Figurative Language" and I stick all of my hard copies in this folder, to make next year's copying easier. Having easy access to hard copies also saves you trouble when you need to make extra copies for some reason.
- I have the IKEA trofax (sp) drawers, with one for each day. At the end of the week, when I get my papers, I sort them by day for the following week. I have a basket that sits on my table where I put all my papers for the day.

What things did you do to help yourself stay organized your first year of teaching? Is there anything you didn't do what you wish you did?

- Labels, file folders, color coding, and bins for each month's worth of stuff
- 1. PLANNER·WRITE EVERYTHING DOWN! maybe it's just me but if I don't write it down, it didn't, or won't, happen. I carried a clipboard with sticky notes everywhere so that if I had to write something down but didn't have my planner, I would write it on a sticky and stick it to my planner to fill in later.
- 2. "Meeting with Myself". I learned this from Together Teacher and love it. Set aside a block of time to have a meeting with yourself. An hour or hour and a half during the week in a place that you can focus. This is your time to declutter your computer desktop, organize emails, and plan your next week out. This is NOT a time to lesson plan, answer or send emails, or anything like that. It is strictly a time to plan out WHEN you will do those things. It sounds silly but it works!!
- 3. Play with systems to find one that works for you. what works for someone else might not work for you. I cannot use an electronic calendar. Planning in my planner is my relaxing time and I enjoy writing out my appointments and lists and then physically checking them off. Some people, hate this! Play with some systems and see what works best! I changed my system three or four times throughout my first year.
- Using binders with dividers helps. Have a filing cabinet with color coded labeled folders for quick access. Example: all my science folders are green and have a unit name on each folder. If you like a document and need it shrunk down for notebooks, make one copy to keep on file for next time. I like the 3 drawer organizers labeled with subjects or days of the week to keep copies and small materials in the same place. Don't let things pile up. Find a system that works for you. Paperclips and binder clips are very helpful.
- One thing that I wish I did was make a note at the end of a lesson on how I feel that it went. If I was using a flipchart for notes, I wish I would have added an extra slide at the end (after school) to just write about how the lesson went and what I would change. That way, I could adjust for this year.
- I didn't make my copies the week ahead like I do now and I wish I did. It's a lifesaver because you already have everything laid out so you can actually have a weekend! Give yourself a space where you can sort out papers; either a binder, file cabinet, drawer organizer, etc. Just creating piles and piles of papers is dangerous!
- Take a couple minutes to clean your desk everyday. It will become a mountain of a mess if you don't!
- Make copies, take pictures of things, and try to stay organized. YOU WILL NOT REMEMBER THAT REALLY COOL ACTIVITY! Document it! write down what worked and what you would change.
- I wish I had done a better job noting in my plan book when I changed something, or a lesson didn't go as planned, or took too long/too short, etc.

HOW DO YOU PREPARE MATERIAL FOR YOUR STUDENTS EVERY SINGLE DAY?

- Routines! I keep the same routines and just switch out the content so that the planning is minimal and kiddos know the basic procedures.
- During planning time. I also get to work at about 7 each morning. (Our school day begins at 8:45)
- I gather materials about 1-2 days before so I know what I have and what I need. If I need copies I do those the day before typically and science I do either the day before or the morning of.
- I like to get copies for the following week finished on Friday during my planning period or before I leave for the day. That way I can come in on Monday and not have to worry about copies for the week.
- My students keep their own supplies in their desk and any classroom/curriculum books in a cubby. I make any copies for students to use the week before and keep them all in a drawer labeled for the day that they'll be used.
- I make sure copies are ready. I make sure I know how the lesson is supposed to flow and have what I need in place. I have a small desk up front where I keep everything I need for that day.

Libraries + Reading

HOW DO YOU SET UP YOUR CLASSROOM LIBRARY? BY LEVEL OR GENRE?

- I do by genre in my large library and then I had another section with leveled books; most of my kids can read the majority of my picture books though.
- I started off doing it by genre and ultimately moved to level. A lot of non-fiction books aren't leveled so it's mostly AR levels for fiction and topic groupings for non-fiction.
- My first year I set my library up by putting books on the shelf. I had chapter books in one section and picture books in the other. Easy peasy! And guess what? My kids still read the books! Don't worry about your library being perfect right from the get-go. It's a huge project and you have so many things to worry about. Your students will still have books and read them even if they're not in any sort of order. If you have the time and want to organize your library, I prefer by genre and series. Animal books, Magic Tree House Books, Books about School, Junie B. Jones, etc.
- I think it's all personal preference! I personally really want to foster a love of reading so I focus on genre. I teach my kiddos how the right fit will help their brain grow and give them the tools to find the right fit book. I encourage them and guide them to pick 2 just right books but one free pick too. So they love reading and don't just get assigned!
- I like having both. I had the top shelf by level, and then the bottom shelves by genre. That way, when students picked for their book bags, they picked three at their level, two above and one below, and then three books from any other genre basket! It gave choice, but I knew they were also reading books at their level!
- I set mine up in alphabetical order. I know most people don't do that. I do it because when you go into a library, they are in alphabetical order. I found my students had a hard time finding books in the library because they weren't grouped in that way in my class.
- I have mine by level but it's not organized that way. My bookshelf was an old book bag cubby you'd see in a kindergarten classroom. I took the hooks out, painted it black and turned it on the side to be my bookshelf. Each year when our library cleans out books that need to be replaced, I snag those that reach 4-6 grade levels for the most part. Some 3 and 7 grade books here and there from retiring teachers. I also email my parents about twice a year asking for old chapter book donations their kids don't read anymore if they'd like to give them a new home.
- Guided Reading level, genre, and series. It gives kids an option to see a variety of ways that books can be sorted.

- I set up my library by genre and I put labels on each bin with a unique color of washi tape. Then I put a piece of washi tape on the books of that genre so the kids match up the different color of tape when returning the books back to the library.
- I truly believe it's all balance. I have some leveled bins for students to quickly grab books that they know are on their level. My library is mostly organized by genre though. All of my fiction genres (i.e. mystery, fantasy, etc.) are located in bins that are the same color, while my non-fiction genres are in a different color set of bins. This separation makes it easier for students to navigate the library and all of their options.
- In kindergarten, I set up by subject and/or author I think this is a personal preference based on how you choose to use your library with your students.
- I highly recommend setting up your library by genre/series/topic. This way, students don't feel limited by their level (which can be very discouraging for some students) and instead have the freedom to choose books that interest them. If your school or district requires you to include the level, you can have the level shown on the book (on the front/back cover, or on the inside cover) but still group the books by series/topic/genre.
- I do both. I have genre/author baskets but this year I am adding some by level. My school uses AR, so I am using those levels.
- This depends on your school. My school likes for my library to be set up based on guided reading levels. However, check with your Principal and see what he or she prefers and suggests.

How do you encourage non readers to become readers without overdoing it? How wide of a skill range of books should you have in your library? Is it okay to group your books in the library by level? Should I let kids take books home from the Classroom library?

- Just surround your kids with books, that's the best you can do for those who just don't have it yet. I had a student last year that was super low and I did all I was supposed to do but it still wasn't clicking by mid year, eventually I just let her choose the books she wanted to read even if they were too high for her and she finally got it and met grade level at the end of the year! You can't pressure them or they'll end up hating it
- I never let kids take my books home because they won't come back but that really depends on your school. I also have a library that is mostly grouped by level but also has bins by topic. I let the kids have 4 level books and 1 free choice in their book bag at a time. The range of skill should encompass all of the kids in your class, so levels would be lower than your lowest to higher than your highest and of course their levels will change during the year.
- This year I'm moving into a reading specialist position so I love these types of questions. YES it's okay to group your library by level BUT you can also have baskets that are grouped by genre and allow for student choice at appropriate times. In my first grade class I had anywhere from K level books to fourth grade leveled books. But the only books that were labeled by level, were K-2nd grade and not all of them. I had many baskets of genres or themes that students could pick from that had all kinds of levels in them. For non readers to become readers you have to figure out their interests and cater to that. Let them read books they enjoy, but are at their level. Sometimes allowing these students to read below their level at first is good because it builds confidence and you can slowly push them more and more. This depends on the age too. Some students will know they aren't reading where they are supposed to be reading and some will have no idea. It's about the classroom environment you set up too. If everyone is a reader in your classroom, EVERYONE IS A READER. Always speak positively about reading and never make it a chore for students. I could literally go on and on about these subjects but I'll just leave it at that for now. Feel free to reach out with any more questions!

- I tell them I don't completely care what they're reading as long as they read. Our media center has a rule of checking out a book then a fun book like a magazine. We also use the accelerated reader program school wide. I have kids check out my books in a system with sticky notes and I keep a log on my computer. You could have a sign out log next to your books too.
- Have a wide range of skill books but also types of books. Also include some real-life reading materials (menus, brochures, catalogs, etc.). This will help the kids see that reading is reading whether it's from a book or not. Also, you can give students a place to recommend books to each other.
- By being excited about reading myself and reading aloud books that get the kids excited to read them themselves. In kindergarten, my magic trick for non-readers is the Elephant & Piggie Series by Mo Willems. When I break those books out in April, I have kids begging for reading time!
- YES, let them take the books home!!! That is so important to ensure that they have adequate access to books. I recommend having books that are two grade levels below and two grade levels above, in addition to books that are on grade level. I recommend grouping books by series/topic/genre so that it's easier for students to find books they are interested in, and they don't feel limited by their level. In order for them to love reading, YOU need to love reading, so read the books they're reading so you can make knowledgeable recommendations for students. I also recommend hosting book tastings and book raffles to boost excitement (google these terms and you will find blog posts on how to host these in your classroom).
- I have found that being enthusiastic about reading and doing read alouds helps get kids excited about reading. The more you read/they read, the more likely they are to find the type of books they enjoy.

What are your favorite books to have in 1st grade?

- Oh my goodness, be still my heart. Here we go (taking this question as best books to read aloud).
 1. Gerald and Piggie books (really anything Mo Willems)
 2. Dragons Love Tacos
 3. The Giving Tree (SUPER impactful for students!)
 4. Junior B Jones series
 5. Mother Bruce
 6. Last Stop on Market Street
 7. Wemberly Worried
 8. Invisible Boy
 9. The Adventures of Beekle
 10. What Do You Do with a Problem? (Any of these books, there are many!)
 11. Hooway For Wodney Wat
- Skippy Jon Jones and anything by Mo Willems
- The Tattle Tongue, Ish, Iris and Walter, the Recess Queen
- Anything by Mo Willems

HOW do I organize my 2nd grade library? What level books should I have, how high?

- If you are doing AR I would have books that start at 0.5 all the way up to 4. You may have kids above 4 by the middle of the year.
- Go way high and way low! It's good to have a variety!
- If you're familiar with fountas and pinnell, use the levels I, J and K for sure. Collaborate with your media specialist or library to also help.
- I organized my library by guided reading levels, series, and genres. Have some books below 2nd grade level and some above 2nd grade level (H·P). This way your students have a variety to choose from and you are reaching all students.
- My library is based on guided reading levels. My books range from level A to level T. I had students for my first year who couldn't read at all and then I also had students who were advanced readers so it's best to have a variety.

What are some of the best guided reading tips and tricks? What are the best books to read aloud in 3rd grade?

- First of all, you should read everything Jan Richardson has written about guided reading. Her book *The Next Step in Guided Reading* is a game changer! Anyways, one of the best things you can do is build a relationship with every reader that comes to your table. You can use group time effectively and efficiently while also having fun with them one on one. Here are some instruction tips that I, as a reading intervention specialist use:
 1. Have a routine — every lesson of mine starts out with word work. This lasts about 2—3 minutes. Quick and effective word work that helps with accuracy and fluency. Then depending on the day, we move on to the lesson, students begin reading independently as I do running records, etc. Then we wrap up with Guided Writing. It's the same routine every Day 1 lesson and every Day 2 lesson. (Jan Richardson has a very effective layout of lessons and routines)
 2. Change books often. students get bored when they are reading the same book for too long. I only spend two days on the same book which usually means, Monday-Tuesday Book 1, Wednesday-Thursday Book 2, and Friday is a formative assessment day where I check student progress. This can be with one of the books, a new book or a one page of leveled text.
 3. READING IS COOL. this is most important for older grades/developing readers. If you have a 6th grader reading at a first grade level, they are going to know they aren't where they should be. It's up to you to make sure they don't ever feel inferior. If they are reading *Nan and Pap* (Reading A-Z, you'll get to know these characters well), *Nan and Pap* are now your new best friend and it's the most fun book you have ever read. Students will feed off your enthusiasm, show it!

Magic Tree House, *The World According to Humphrey* (any of those in that series), *Wonder*, *Because of Winn Dixie*, *The Tiger Rising*... all are good read alouds.
- Follow my friend on @mrs.brownsfriends for some of her ideas. Other teachers on Instagram are great too for those ideas. Keep activities engaging, to the point, hands on. Also if you can, have a technology station and a media center station to get a small group out of your room for 10 minutes to either do a maker space station there and/or check out new books.
- Guided Reading · For the low kiddos, start with a quick word sort focusing on a phonics concept and then choose a reading passage/book/chapter/paragraph/etc that can tie into that phonics pattern. For the higher kiddos, review a comprehension concept and teach them how to annotate while they read. Have them look for that comprehension skill as they're reading and record it.

CO-teaching:

I Will be co-teaching this year (too many kids for one teacher not enough space in the school for two separate classrooms) my concern is being treated more like a student teacher than an equal teacher. How do I approach my co-teacher with new ideas and incorporate my own things without upsetting her? How do I gain paraprofessional support - based on my ESY experience they view me as new and not knowing much about anything.

- THIS IS MY JAM! I taught my first year in a co teaching classroom and this was my very concern. Honestly, you have to just be open and honest always. Critical conversations are things you'll have to learn to deliver effectively and you'll find that the other teacher is probably more receptive than you think. My co teacher and I were/are best friends. She had 7 years of experience in 1st grade and was amazing. But I taught her a lot too. Never feel like you don't have anything to contribute because you have less experience or are younger. Always have a rationale for why you want to do something a certain way! Explain why you think it'll work or why something isn't working. Also, make sure you two are on the same page with expectations. Kids will try to be sneaky and play you! Haha. (Yes even 6 year olds). If you are both on the same page and are communicating, there won't be a problem!
- Fake it till you make it! I co taught several classes and had this issue as well. You are competent and have every right to be there. Be respectful of everyone you work with and take their opinions into account. Your paras are likely very knowledgeable and you need them on your side. You have to convey yourself as a confident person and be assertive for yourself. You can even approach your co-teacher as giving them some "time off" from planning and incorporate your own ideas and lessons.

- As a former special ed teacher, I get this! Gaining respect can be really difficult if you are young and your staff are all older than you. I think for me just showing that I know what I am doing really helped them trust me. Also, I found that one thing works like a charm. Butter them up! Show them that you can't do what you're doing without them. That will make them want to try out the things you suggest.
- Do you have a mentor teacher in the building? If so, ask them for advice on how to approach/talk to that person. They probably know them well or well enough to help ease you into co teaching with them. My first experience I felt like you but it was my own insecurity or paranoia if you will. My co teacher is still with me and everything she says I listen to but I decide on what to do with it based on how it serves my students. Don't be afraid to speak up or they may continue to think you don't know, when you really do.
- My 2nd year of teaching I had a co-teacher come into my room for part of the day. There are two things that really helped it feel like a true CO-teacher experience (instead of student-teacher experience). The first is how we interacted in front of the students. I was always specific in my language saying "WE want to see..." or "OUR objective..." when lining out directions to students (instead of using I, me, my). Taking turns leading instruction, fielding questions, elaborating on one another's points, and modeling things together helped students to see us as equals. The second thing that helped was how we interacted when students weren't around. Having graduated not long before that experience, I had a lot of fresh perspective, ideas, and up-to-date knowledge to share. I looked at it as a dance. If she shared something, then I affirmed her idea but also maybe added an idea of my own or built off of hers. We became "thinking partners" building off of one another's ideas. It wasn't easy at first. In fact, it was awkward to find our rhythm. But I tried to learn as much about her as I could so that I could get her sense of humor and let her get to know more about me so that things would be more comfortable.
- This is what I would do if I were in your situation. I would try and sit down with your co-teacher before school starts and have an honest conversation with her. I would say that you're excited to work with her, you're excited to try the things that she has, but you'd also like to try your own things too. Once you start the conversation with a positive note, you can say something like, "Oh good, I'm glad you feel that way. I'm just a little nervous about being treated as a student teacher. What can we do so that students don't feel that way about our teaching situation?" That way you're not necessarily saying that your co-teacher won't see you as an equal, but it will be brought to her attention that you need to be treated on the same level that she is. Just be honest and up front with her. It will feel so much better to talk it out than keep frustrations.
- This is tough. The key is to plan together and get to know each other. Open the lines of communication early and talk about how both of you will approach the other one if you're uncomfortable with something. Let your co-teacher know you worry about this. If she's aware from the get-go, it may not become a problem. Just be open and honest.

Other:

Who do I ask what questions... I know that is vague but, who do I go to to ask where to put materials in my room that I will not use? When can I log in to the school website/gradebook? When can I get my class lists and know who is on my sped case load?

- Your team! They should be there for you for all of that, also I suggest asking them which people to "avoid" at the school, there are always going to be people who are going to be negative and try to put your excitement down, once you know who they are then you can remind yourself to be polite but don't take what they say to heart; hopefully you get a great mentor as well
- Hopefully there's another SPED teacher on campus. Definitely talk to your team leader. You also will want to become good friends with the people who work in the office.
- In my experience, the secretary's know all!!! Use them as a resource, if they don't know the answer, they will probably be able to point you in the direction of who does! My district gave me my login info at new employee orientation.
- My advice is to befriend your school secretaries, janitors, and IT staff. Between these three groups all of your questions will be answered and more! Reach out to them with any questions you have right now, find out their favorite snacks, and win them over. They rule the school.
- This will be something your school will most likely go over during your before school PD. Almost every school has New Hire training where you learn the logistics of the school and district! I would reach out to people on your team because chances are, if they have been there for a year or more they know who to talk to for specifics.
- A lot of schools pair you with a mentor teacher, but if not, during your preplanning time, spend some time trying to find a teacher at your school who would be willing to show you the ropes so to speak. Ask lots of questions, because if the first person you ask doesn't know or doesn't really want to help you, they will likely point you in the direction of someone who will.
- Principal! Special ed. director! Anyone! My district assigns a mentor to all new staff. Find a mentor and don't be afraid to ask!
- Grade chair or mentor teacher or admin for materials not being used. School website/grade book: local school technology coordinator (lstrc) or front office staff member who does database stuff and class lists. Sped case most likely comes from admin. All of it depends on how your school or district does things.

- Here are my favorite go-to people to ask questions to: my mentor teacher, my secretary, my custodians, computer teacher, & grade-level teammates. Become buds with your secretary and custodian! If they don't know the answer, they'll help you find out how to get one!
- Contact your principal and ask them if you have a mentor. I was assigned a mentor my first year and we met over the summer, she answered all my questions! If not, I would ask him/her for suggestions of someone in your grade level to contact.
- If it's your room, you shouldn't need to ask anyone where to put things. Class lists usually come from the school secretary. For the school website/gradebook, talk to a veteran teacher...and make a friend! :) For SPED case loads, talk to an SPED teacher!
- 100% build that relationship with your principal. My principal is always my number 1 go-to guy and he always has the best advice without looking down on me. He is also so supportive of my choices, and that support is huge! We don't get our class lists until meet the teacher day, so it depends on each school. We had new teacher meetings and that is when they showed us how to use the gradebook.
- Find a coworker! Especially if you are new to the school. Your coworkers will gladly help you!
- Will you be assigned a teacher mentor? If so they will be your go-to for everything. If not, these sound like questions for your administrator. Or, find someone you connect with on your grade level. In all the schools I've worked in, there are always 1 or 2 teachers who love to take new teachers under their wing and help out.
- I recommend being best friends with the administrative staff, the secretary, and the janitors. They hold a lot of power when it comes to moving things, ordering things, getting access to things, etc. If you are nice to them, they will be more than willing to help you out and answer your questions!
- If you have a mentor teacher or a grade level/team leader on your grade level, they are a good place to start. The school secretary is another good person to make friends with and ask.

Does administration expect me to have lots of questions? Who is the best person to talk to within the administration? Should I make a point to talk to my principal about certain things?

- It is good to have a lot of questions. I have worked with new teachers who didn't ask a lot of questions and they were rarely doing what they were supposed to be! I would ask your principal if they would be willing to set you up with a mentor teacher. In my district it is required. It was really nice to have a teacher who was my point person to ask questions to. Also if you have questions you can ask your team. You will need to gauge your principal's style on whether or not you should be asking them a lot of questions. Some are more hands on and others are hands off.
- YES! Build a relationship with your admin! If you have a coach, that's another person you want to check in with. Don't be afraid to ask questions, and when they give you feedback, take it and run with it even if you might not agree at first. Administrators want to see that you are eager to learn and grow as an educator.
- I think that just depends on your personality. Try your grade chair or department chair first with questions, then your admin. Interact with your principal but he/she has a lot going on so your best Rep to reach out to in my opinion is your admin.
- I would try to answer most of my questions before I talk to my admin. If I'm not sure if I should ask my principal, sometimes I ask my secretary if I should ask my principal. I would make it a point to talk to your principal about situations that you're not sure how to handle. For instance, I had a parent volunteer who came in smelling strongly of smoke every week to the point it was giving my students asthma attacks. I wasn't comfortable telling this parent to please stop smoking, so I asked my principal what to do and he handled the situation. If something happens and you're not sure if you need to tell your principal, my general question-asking chain is: Mentor teacher, counselor or safe school assistant, secretary, principal. Usually someone can answer my question before I have to ask the principal, but I also use my discretion if my principal needs to know about a situation.
- If you don't have questions it's okay! I spent time with my team over the summer (my first year) and didn't have any questions. Over time you want to develop a relationship with your principal so don't be afraid to ask for help!

- Honestly, it depends on the school. My school has 1 principal and three deans. We are to go to our deans first and they will talk to the principal. However, for HUGE issues/school-wide ideas or suggestions, we can go straight to the principal.
- My suggestion is to ask other teachers who've been at the school longer and see what they say.
- It really depends on your principal, but I think it is best to have your principal on your side! I loved talking to my principal and reaching out because he had such great advice and always knew what to say. That is what they are there for to support teachers!
- I would talk with my team first. Your team can give you info and guidance as to whether this really needs to be brought up to the administration. We have grade level meeting and minutes are turned in to the principal. This is a good place for questions.
- If your school assigns you a specific supervisor within your administration (for evaluations), that would be your go-to. Admin usually expects a lot of questions from newbies. In many places, you will be assigned a teacher mentor and that will be your first person to take questions to. It's always a good idea to form a good, professional working relationship with your principal. Don't become a "yes" man, as then you're likely to be walked on and end up with way too much on your plate. But try to volunteer for a few requests from admin. If they know you are someone they can count on and a valuable member of your school team, you're more likely to get support and things you need from your admin.

How do you get everything done that is required of a teacher without being there until late at night? How do you balance school life and a personal life?

- As a first year teacher it's very difficult to have a personal life. I wish there was another way to say that. In order to get it all done with such a steep learning curve you will put in a lot of hours. As you get more comfortable you'll be able to leave more work at school and leave earlier.
- I made lists of things that really needed to get done vs. what I wanted to get done. For example, choosing to teach a simple math lesson vs. planning and prepping for a very detailed super fancy one each week. I also set limits for myself! I gave myself one sleep in day a week where I would not go to school until contracted time! Giving myself that same day every week was a life send. Maximize parent volunteers to do menial things like cutting or copying, so you can focus on the teaching!!
- You have to find balance and fast. This is where burn out occurs. Set a plan that you'll get x amount of things done at school, and y done at home BUT you have to put work away by 7 o'clock or something. Give yourself boundaries. This is where planning ahead helps a lot! Get in the habit of having lessons and copies made x amount of days ahead of time. That way you can spend the weekend (or most of it) taking care of yourself!
- It will never be done, and that's ok. I set schedules for myself, and after that allotted time, I'm done and that's ok. You also can't expect yourself to do it all. Utilize your other teachers and the other people who teach your grade level. If you don't take care of yourself than you can't take care of your students. You are a priority.
- I don't bring anything home. Yup. You read that correctly. In my 10 years of teaching I've only brought work home 3 times. I get anything I can get done during my planning and get to work at about 7 am (school beings at 8:45) anything I can't get done during that time can wait until the next day. Don't stress about it! You have to live and enjoy your life, too!
- You have to find what level of satisfaction works for you. I stayed late about once a week the first part of the year and got 3 weeks ahead on most stuff. I then learned where my "breaking point" was and learned to walk away from stuff because it will always be there tomorrow. My motto still to this day is not to take anything home because I know I won't work on it and you need the separation to relax. You have to learn to say no and use your planning period as best as possible. Make checklists and prioritize what needs to be done first or what quick little things you can get done and out of the way so that you can focus on the big things.

- Honestly, for the first few months I practically LIVED at school because I was trying so hard to complete the "to do" list. And I got so burnt out. I stopped having fun and I would cringe when my alarm went off in the morning. So I eventually told myself that I would *try* for one week of coming in and leaving at my contract time, and not come in during the weekend, and guess what? The Universe didn't explode! So once I physically saw that I could tone it down and I could still be a teacher, I was way more successful and got to a healthier mental space.

Here's my plan for year 2: Stay late as needed for my first month of school (because really it's all kind of crazy at the beginning of the year), and allow myself 1 late night per week and set an alarm to go home by 5:15 every night (my contract end time is 4:30, so I'm giving myself 45 minutes to clean up and prep for the next day or week). I think if I can stick to that, I won't feel the way I did my first year and I'll be able to be a better teacher for my students, a better wife for my husband, and a better mom to my dog.

- You will start to learn how to maximize your planning periods after the first few weeks of school. I like to make a to-do every morning and then number that in order of importance. This way, if I have a moment to myself or when students are working individually, I know what needs to be done.
- This is something you will struggle with in the beginning. We all do, and we all feel differently about the school vs. home balance. Just remember, not everything needs to be graded, you have prep times, use them and a few late nights every once in a while, won't hurt you. It takes time to find the balance, and it is different for everyone.
- Set a cut off time for yourself. Whatever you don't get done by that cut-off time can wait until tomorrow. Your classroom won't fall apart if you go home and watch Netflix instead of grading papers!
- I did not do a good job at this. I was always at school. I don't think it's bad thing, though, because that is where I wanted to be. When you hit your limit. Leave and go watch some real housewives to unwind!
- You just leave. Teaching is the one profession where there is ALWAYS one more thing that can be done. I have children so my MOM shift starts at 3:30. That forces me to pick and choose what I do and what I leave for the next day. Set a specific time to leave and stick to it.
- You will never get everything done. So you have to prioritize. And it is harder you're first couple of years. But it does get easier.

Are Morning Meetings Useful & Productive in 3rd grade? If so, what can be done at them?

- THEY ARE ALWAYS PRODUCTIVE! Have the kids share what is going on in their personal life, look them in the eyes and say, "I am glad you are here!" That will set a huge tone for the day!
- My friend taught 3rd last year and at our school morning meetings were called Advisory. This was a time in all grade levels where social and emotional learning took place! It was a good time to get to know your classmates and teachers, talk about important or pressing topics (we called this counsel), or do an activity based around an event or holiday. It was all about team building and community and can absolutely be done in all grades!
- Morning meetings are useful and productive at ANY grade level. Give students roles and jobs to give them responsibility and to take control of their education. Allow students to share things from their own lives. It can also be a great time to build your class community, allow students to share and problem solve with one another.
- I use them in 5th and find them to be an excellent way to create a classroom community. We write about concerns, comments, questions, kudos, and then do a bonding activity.
- I've never taught third but my friend has and still currently does (TOTY too). She reads a book with a lesson & they talk about it. Pull in some character traits and a quote. Some sort of student engagement that's quick to pull in students first thing in the morning.
- You can review math skills, assign a word-of-the-day, ask how students have used skills they learn(ed) at home, share a favorite book/education product that you have, etc.
- YES! Get "The Morning Meeting Book" It has suggestions for every grade level.
- I started doing morning meetings in my 2nd grade class last year and I loved it. We started each meeting with a greeting, then did an activity (game/song) and ended with sharing.

IF I HAVE A "NO HOMEWORK" POLICY CAN I STILL ASSIGN THEM TO PRACTICE MATH SKILLS & READ OR IS THAT CONSIDERED HOMEWORK?

- You can but usually you have to say it's optional and you can't take it as a grade; my county took a no homework policy last year and that's what we did
- If there is a no homework policy I would just encourage kids to read at home and leave it at that. There can not be a no homework policy and an assignment.
- I *believe* you can RECOMMEND they read and practice their math skills but they cannot be REQUIRED. You can send stuff home to work on but there cannot be a penalty for not completing it. I would check with admin or your team first though.
- That sounds like homework to me.
- That's still considered homework. If you want most kids to actually do it, call it homework. I don't give homework every night which is something you could think about. There's always word work to be practiced/studied at home. Assigning a math page a couple nights a week is an idea. I always allow class time to do a "homework" page to give more independent practice while still having me around to answer questions. I also know where I teach most kids have outside responsibilities and sports so I limit homework as well because I know a lot won't get it done or have some "excuse". It helps take homework off parents too. If you do give homework, it should never be more than 30 minutes for a couple of subjects. Give your kids study tips so they don't study or do homework for hours each night. Because then you may get parent complaints without even realizing you have students doing that.
- If you think you will assign them math practice or reading as homework then I would not state that you have a "no homework" policy. But, you can emphasize that students will have little to no homework on most nights.
- I would consider that homework. Those things could be done the last 15 minutes of class and then say finish at home if not complete. That may work.
- I limit the homework I assign but expect students to read every night. In order for this to work, make sure you are giving students choice in what to read, and letting them take books home.

HOW DO YOU MONITOR YOUR STUDENTS' PROGRESS?

- Color coded charts are your best friend.
- This is a very broad question. I use formal assessment (assignments, tests) and more informal things like conversations, small group, how students are participating in lessons. Keep a data binder and keep data on everything. That way if something comes up for RTI you will be a step ahead.
- This depends on the subject and your school/district. I'm going to speak to reading since that's my speciality. We use benchmark assessments every quarter so I use that to drive my small group instruction as well as the meat of my students progress. But every day, I am assessing their reading accuracy and fluency by doing running records that I keep in a binder behind each of their names. I also do checklists just to see if students understood the focus for that lesson for not. There are so many ways to keep track of progress and I'm sure your school will have some things they will require.
- Portfolios, pre and post assessments, keeping data collection on behavior issues.
- I like quizizz for reviewing sometimes which creates excel sheets with data for the unit were covering. I like quick pre and post tests ·10 questions max for quick formative assessments. I also use data notebooks. The possibilities are endless with those. It depends on grade level and your teaching style.
- I use an online gradebook or just observational notes.
- Quizzes, tests, written responses, small group questioning. All give you a look into who gets it and who is struggling.
- 4 letter...ESGI

What do Teacher Mentors do?

- They should help you with any questions you have and teach you all the ins and outs of the school
- If they are good they will answer your questions, check in on you, help you in whatever ways you need!
- I had a very negative teacher mentor, so I had to distance myself. Know they are not there to be your boss or threaten your success. A good mentor should give feedback on your choices, your style!
- Depends on the school/district. Mine was AMAZING and she was more like my life coach. But generally they are there to support you however you need — showing you where to find resources and materials, advocating for you, anything!
- Help you with anything and everything you may need!
- Answer questions that seem like sometimes dumb questions to ask (no such thing, especially when you're a newbie). Generate ideas for lessons or how to approach/work with some people in the building. Give tips and tricks for big or small things. Basically they are your help button when you need it.
- Teacher mentors are SO helpful, they are a great lifeline to use your first year. I was able to ask my mentor any and all questions and felt so supported by her. If you need help figuring out grading, talking to parents, getting materials, help with a student, they are there for you! Use them!
- They are your best friend! They are also excited to help you, so lean on them for everything!
- Teacher mentors should be there for advice and to help you when needed.
- As a former teacher mentor, I can tell you that it does vary by district. But I was tasked with observing my new teacher (non-evaluative, I always focused on what she did well and asked her what she wanted guidance on for improvement) going to professional development and observing other teachers with her. I was her go-to person for any questions she had or help she needed.
- It depends on the teacher and what you need/want. Sit down with your mentor as soon as possible to see what you each want/need.

How much should you prepare on your own before meeting your team? (worried that she may already have system/idea in place and that I'm wasting time making new things)

- Don't be afraid to bring new ideas. Sometimes the veterans do the same thing because that's all they know. They may be looking for new ideas but don't feel confident enough to ask or they don't have a clue about the fresh idea you have! Share and collaborate! Some things will get used and others won't. It also can switch up each year. Some things may work better one year with a certain group of kids, the next it may not. Don't get comfortable with the way things are year after year. Your teaching style is constantly being redesigned while your students learning style is always being redefined. Another thing is too, what works for your class may not work for another based on the kids and your teaching style. Be on the same page and teach the same content but do it in a way that works for you.
- Definitely think about things on your own but be open to new ideas/systems that your teammates may use. Share your ideas and talk about it as a team. Just because you're a new teacher doesn't mean that your ideas/systems won't be as effective.
- It is good to have ideas when meeting a new team. As far as true preparation, you may want to wait until a plan is solidified.
- Your first year is not the time to reinvent the wheel. Make sure you know your school and district expectations, curriculum, and guidelines, before you plan anything. Every district I've worked for has had a set curriculum. One was very strict about what you would teach and when. My current district gives us a bit more freedom. And every district varies with how closely you have to follow their purchased curriculum.
- I recommend always having your own ideas and lessons to contribute! You never know, they may be wanting to change how they taught something and end up using your idea! Just because you're new doesn't mean you have to fit in and do whatever everyone else is doing.
- I like to at least plan the first week of school before meeting with my team. Typically the first week of school is used for teaching routines and procedures, building relationships with your students and the students getting to know each other. Then once you meet with your team, I would go from there.

Thank you so much for reading! Whether you are a first, fifth, or twenty-fifth year teacher I hope you found this information valuable and that you are able to adapt the advice given here to meet the needs of the students in your classroom.

First year teachers, I am so excited for you to start this journey into the field of education. Your first year will be a roller coaster. There will be good days and bad days but remember why you decided to be a teacher; shake off the bad days and cherish the good days. Know that I'm cheering for you!

If you aren't a first year teacher I hope you learn, grow, and were encouraged as you read through this wealth of information. Be sure to take time to reflect on your own teaching experience and think of ways to incorporate what you've read. As teachers we should always be learning.

If you have any questions or comments feel free to contact me: tisforteaching678@gmail.com

www.tisforteachingblog.com