

Before School Begins

Bulletin Boards - In Kindergarten and Grade One it is expected that there will be a calendar board - the alphabet and numbers and colours. There should be a bulletin board that has backing and a border but left empty waiting for the students' work on the first week. Leave room for your word wall. Often there is a board with the students' names and pictures. Try backing your boards with plain fabric stretched tightly. It fades much less than the butcher paper.

It may not be Autumn yet in your area, but it will come soon. Use the Fall colours of yellow, orange, red and brown in your decorations. If you back all your bulletin boards with orange, it can be left up for Halloween! Decorate your door on both sides! It is a nice welcome to your classroom.

Desk Tags - If you are computer literate, make up personal desk tags for each student. Have the name in primary print, the student's number, a number line and the alphabet in lower case. Laminate them and attach with the clear packing tape. Have some without the names and numbers as you will get new students during the year.

Homework - Decide how you want to manage this. The monthly homework calendars save you a lot of work. You will also be allowing the students to take books home. The large baggies with the zipper are good for back-and-forth protection.

The Word Wall - Have the letters up, and the students' names ready to put up. If you have the year's words ready it would save a lot of time. File them in order. Most teachers do not laminate the words, as that can put a glare so the children can't see them clearly. If you don't have a list of words, use the Dolch list. In Grade Two or Three you may not want a word wall. You can make a computer list of words for each letter, and the students can glue each letter's words to the correct page of their personal dictionaries.

The Coat Place - Students bring jackets, backpacks and lunches. This area can be a mess if there isn't directed organization.

Library - It is not necessary to put out all the books. Have an attractive variety out for the first day.

Classroom Behavior Plan - Decide on your plan. If you have a good class, you may not need a system of rewards or punishments. Do not reward or punish unless you have to! Let praise be the reward, and a 'teacher's look' be the deterrent. You may want to start out this way - and with most classes this will be all that is needed for several months. But..... know what you are going to do if a child does not respond to this and causes disturbance.

Personal Numbers - Assign each student a number. That number is used all year and is very handy! Put it at the top of work for easy filing. See at a glance who has not handed work in. Number coat hooks and other personal spaces. They can line up by number and do jobs by number. Use them for addition and subtraction, too.

Math Manipulatives - Put them in plastic containers with lids, and label them. Only have out what you will need and put the rest in a cupboard. Do not let the students use these as toys or they will become mixed, lost and damaged.

Daily Plans - There is a lot of repetition in our daily plans. If you do them on the computer, you can cut-and- paste the basic things you do every day and add the day's specific lessons. This will save you lots of time! Print it out and put it into a binder. Computer plans are also very easy to change.



Tip:

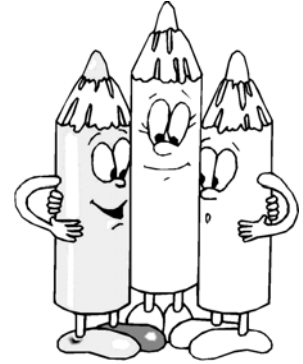
"I shake everyone's hand at the door in the morning and at the end of the day. I expect eye contact and a polite response. If you expect good manners the classroom will be a nicer place!"

Before the First Day

If you are new to the school meet and remember the names of the personnel with whom you and your children will associate.

Set up the classroom, thinking about all the areas you will need - the calendar meeting place, the library, the teacher's desk or other personal area, centres, computers, storage for math manipulatives, etc.

Cover the bulletin boards and frame them with borders. Autumn colours of red, orange and yellow are nice! Make the walls attractive, colourful and welcoming - without overdoing it. Leave at least one bulletin board with fresh coloured backing for students' work in the first week. Make a 'Welcome' bulletin board with all the children's names.



Clean off your desk and organize it for the school year. Have a container for the things you will need many times each day and put everything else away in a cupboard. A large sheet of poster tag in a bright colour placed where you work on the desk outlines your space. A vase of flowers or a plant makes your desk beautiful.

If you have a class list, label the coat places, cubbies and other personal places for the children. You may want to leave the desk tags loose until the end of the first week.

Prepare a computer folder with files for each student. Also make a basic data base on MSWorks with the students' names. Copy this several times. One of these copies can have the children's birthdays, addresses, parent contact information, etc. One can be for math tests, another for knowing letter sounds, etc.

Prepare a binder with sections for each child if you write anecdotal notes on a daily or weekly basis. This can also have spreadsheets for math scores and test results if you don't do this on the computer.

Create a sub folder. Have seating plans, spare activities, worksheets, schedules, emergency information and a class list.

If you wish, write a class handbook - see page 29.

Organize the classroom library and know how you are going to use it.

Know all your procedures. How are you going to handle bathroom passes, sharpening pencils, handling supplies, going to groups, lining up, etc? What will your rules be? You may want to brainstorm the rules with the children, but you should know the final result first.



Prepare lessons for the first week or two. Prepare more than you think you can possibly use. You will always use much more (or much less) than you think you will.

Have materials ready for those first lessons. Pull the books you want to read, have the art supplies, the math sheets and manipulatives, the pencils sharpened, the paper ready, etc.

Make nametags that the students can wear the first few days until you learn all the names. These can be labels stuck to their shirts, tags around the neck, crowns, etc.

The First Day

Many schools have the students go to their last year's teacher for the first day so that the school knows the enrollment and can put them into classes. If you do this, and are wondering what to do with the children you had last year - here are some ideas.

You could have them write letters of advice (do's and don'ts, rules to follow, etc.) to the new students about being in your class...something light and funny that they can illustrate. Then compile the letters and pictures into a book that you can read to your new students on the first day you have them. *Martha*

Dear New Students,

I would like to wish you a _____ year in grade one. I had a _____ year with Mrs. _____, and here are some things to help you have a _____ year:

1. Always remember to _____ when you _____.
2. Don't be afraid to _____ if you _____.
3. Never, ever _____ or _____.

Mrs. J. can be really _____, especially when _____.
Something else you should know about Mrs. J. is that she _____.
My favourite memory of grade _____ was _____ because _____.

Good luck!

Sincerely,

"I made bubble letter names..... I set up a computer page in Word - turning it to the landscape form. I use Comic Sans font and enlarge it to about 200 by highlighting the letter size and typing in the number. Then I go under 'Format' at the top, to 'Font' and then click beside the word 'Outline'. This makes bubble letters of the word. Center the word. Now, I print in each child's name and print them off. The very first morning, when they come in and I am busy, I give them their names and some old crayons and have them colour in the letters. This gives me a bit of time to organize, talk to parents, etc. If there is a child who is not on the list, I just have this format page up on my computer and make a new one in a flash.

Later in the week we use these to put into alphabetical order, counting boys and girls, graphing the number of letters in the names, etc."

"I give my kids an envelope with the letters to make their name and I tell them there is a secret word in there! When they figure it out we glue the letters onto a paper and draw a self-portrait."

"We make little books that the kids can take home and show off how they can 'read'!

Cover: I'm In Grade One - There is a box for them to draw an apple or you can put a graphic here.

Page 1 - I am _____. The child prints the name and draws him/herself

Page 2 - This is my friend _____. The child draws a friend in class and prints the friend's name.

Page 3 - My teacher is (you put this). The child draws a picture of me.

Page 4 - This is the school. I print in the school name and the child draws the school.

I have these photocopied and we do the pages at different times in the first school day."

Sing to the tune of London Bridge -

This is <George> we're glad he's here, glad he's here, glad he's here!

This is <George>

We're glad he's here.

Say 'Hello' to <George>. (and we take a minute to all say hello)



More First Day Ideas

Introduce yourself! Welcome the students and talk about what to expect in your class. Go over the schedule with them, discussing lunch, specials, recess, etc., and put the information on a chart or on a weekly timetable that they can refer to.

“I make a sheet of labels (20 to a page) with one child’s name per page - the print in bubble letters. On the first day they colour them in. Now there are 20 labels to put on exercise books, pencil cases, coat hook spots, etc.”

Play a name game or other circle game to learn all the names: Give each child a name tag or the name on a cord around the neck. Play, for example, ‘Who stole (or ‘took’ if you don’t like the word ‘stole’) the cookie from the cookie jar?’ Go through this until the children are comfortable with the sequence and words – then put it to rhythm by slapping the knees with alternate hands. It will take some time and practice to do it in rhythm!

Who Stole the Cookie?

Leader: **Who** stole the **cookie** from the **cookie jar**?

Group: Amanda stole the cookie from the cookie jar.

Amanda: (*Point to self*) Who me?

Group: Yes, you.

Amanda (*shake head*): Couldn’t be.

Group: Then who?

Amanda: Thomas stole the cookie from the cookie jar.

Thomas: Who me? Etc.



-The children are always eager to see the new classroom books, so do two SSR or DEAR (Drop Everything and Read) times.

- With Grade Twos and Threes, write in the journals at the end of the day. Today they can tell all about the first day of school and what they enjoyed. It will be fun to look back at this!

- Do a class Time Capsule. You could use a Pringles can that has been decorated for the capsule. Each child gets a paper and has to write out their answers to a few questions about their favourite colour, book, food, etc. They copy a sentence or poem in their neatest printing and draw a picture of themselves on the first day of school, and then they trace and colour their handprint on the back. When everyone is done, collect the papers, roll them up, stuff them in the can, and put it away in a place that is out of reach, but in their view. On the last day of school take the tube down and pass back the papers. The children like to see if any of their favourites have changed, and you can encourage them to put their hand on top of the ‘old’ print to see if they’ve grown during the year.

Play Classmates Bingo! Have all the names of the students on a chart and on small cards or popsicle sticks to draw. The children get blank Bingo sheets and fill in the squares with the names of their choice. Then I pull names at random and they cover the names they have with a candy. They love to hear their names called. On the second game draw out the names you haven’t called yet and put all the sticks back when every name has been used.

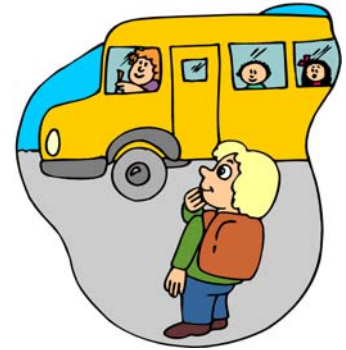
Do ‘All About Me’ math. How many numbers are part of your life? Your address, phone number, number of people in the family, number of pets, age, etc.

Go around the classroom and read all the charts and poems, etc. Then give the children some time to ‘read the room’ themselves. Have magic wands, pointers, glasses, binoculars, flashlights, magnifying glasses, etc. to focus in and help them read the words.

Give the children clip-boards and interlined paper. Have them ‘write the room’, printing words they know. Have them hand these in and you will be able to see the level of printing accuracy.

Getting Ready - Things To Do

- Make name tags for desks, coat hooks, bulletin boards, door, necklaces, helpers; on magnets, clothes pins and/or popsicle sticks. Or..... instead of name tags, put up numbers permanently and give each student a number on the first day.
- Calendar corner – Make or buy a calendar, weather chart, days of the week, months, today is, days in school chart, birthday chart, temperature, etc., and tack up behind your meeting circle spot. Have a handy place to put all the things needed - perhaps a plastic box with drawers that could sit on a table beside your chair.
- Charts – alphabet, colour words, numbers and number words, poems, direction words, etc. Different grade levels have different needs.
- Set up the word wall, ready for the first week's words. Having the year's words ready is a time saver.
- Letters to parents and/or students. Last year's Primary Success September/October issue had a good outline for a class handbook. A great idea is to have the parents write a letter telling you about their child.
- Prepare your computer files for each child and a data-base with emergency numbers, addresses, birthdays, etc. Prepare data-bases for marks in different subjects and a place for anecdotal remarks.
- Know what your classroom rules will be and have a rules chart prepared if you wish.
- Know the school rules and procedures if you are new to the school.
- Review curriculum outcomes. Cut and paste the outcomes for your grade from the provincial website into files of your own, and separate into months if possible.
- Prepare a binder for marks and anecdotal remarks that is useful to use on a regular basis.
- Have at least one week's lessons, worksheets, flashcards, games, etc., ready.
- You will want to have your students tested in the first week or two. The Successful Assessment K-2 book is very useful - it provides tests at each grade level and check sheets so you can have a good idea of each student's level of knowledge.
- Have art supplies ready and paper supplies organized.
- Have plans for the handling of supplies.
- Have a decorated 'Welcome' bulletin board with the children's names.
- One bulletin board should be covered and outlined, ready to put up the children's work in the first week.
- Organize the classroom library, displaying books.
- Have books chosen to read to the class in the first week.
- Have a handy shelf for teacher's manuals, curriculum guides and useful books. Put boxes of themes and teacher 'stuff' out of sight. If you have no room to put them out of sight, perhaps there is another place in the school – or leave them at home until you need them!
- Organize your own supplies – pencils, pens, ruler, chalk, scissors, glue, stapler, etc.
- Have file folders labeled with the children's names and portfolios ready.
- Understand your procedures – entering the room, bathroom, sharpening pencils, lining up, taking drinks, etc.
- Ask another teacher for help if you need it, and be always willing to help others. Share ideas, poetry, books, units and give support when you can.
- And after all that – relax and be rested for the big day!



Before School Begins

Setting up the physical classroom:

1. Think where the teacher's desk will go (if you have one). Most teachers prefer it at the back or side of the classroom, with clear room to approach it. Many teachers have bookshelves for curriculum guides, etc., near the desk, and a computer for your use either on the desk or nearby. If you have a computer, consider electrical outlets, cords, etc. Organize things on the top of the desk so it will stay tidy.

2. How will your children be seated? Desks or tables can be placed in groups of 2, 4 or more, or placed individually. Once you have found a seating arrangement that works well, you can place small bits of tape on the carpet or floor under the table legs. This way the students can easily put the tables or desks back in this ideal position accurately. If you have a lino floor, you can make small spots with white-out or other washable marker to show the leg positions.

3. If you have tables in the classroom, make sure they have a distinct purpose. Tables that don't have a specific purpose collect papers and books and impede traffic.

4. All Kindergarten and Grade One classrooms, and most Grade Two and Three rooms have a meeting area. You will likely use this for morning calendar activities. You will either use this same area for group lessons or have another area with either chalk board (or white board) access and a chart paper stand.

5. Plan your library area. Will you be able to display the covers of a number of books to lure students into reading them? Is there a place to sit and read? Are your bookcases adequate and attractive?

6. Consider the traffic - where will the students walk to get to the meeting area? Where will they line up to leave the classroom? Is the path clear to the coat area? How will they walk to get to the class library?

Decorating your room:

1. You will want a word wall. This must be seen clearly from every desk. If the distance from the desks is great, the words must be made larger. Do not laminate the words as there can be glare, and do not print the words on dark coloured paper.

2. As you decorate your home so that you live in a pleasant space, decorate your classroom pleasantly. You will spend more time there than in your living room, so make sure it is attractive! Do not under-decorate or over-decorate. The decorations should be relevant to the students. Put charts, pictures, alphabet, numbers, etc. up in an orderly way. Plants and/or fresh flowers add a pleasant touch.

Organizing your teaching 'stuff':

1. Put all books and teachers' materials that you will not be using frequently out of sight.

2. Many teachers fill plastic tubs with the things needed for each month. The ones that are not being used can be kept at your home or in another part of the school if you do not have out of sight storage.

3. Be tidy! Keep the top of your desk free so it can be used for doing your work.

4. If you are susceptible to piles of paper that need to be filed, put a plastic tub under your desk or other inconspicuous place and put the filing into it. Do the filing at least once a month.

Know your rules and routines:

Make a list of all the rules and routines you will need in your classroom. You will need to know how you are going to handle children moving around the classroom, drinks, restroom visits, passing/collecting papers, lining up, fire drills, computer use, etc. You must have routines and rules for handling supplies, sharpening pencils, using rulers and glue, turning in finished work and many more. Especially in Kindergarten and Grade One these must be taught thoroughly, modeled and practiced. In Grade



Tip:

Number your students alphabetically using the first names (or last name if this is more convenient). Use this number on supplies, coat hooks, personal items, mailboxes, etc.

Use the number to file papers quickly and easily—even the students can do it. Use the numbers on your computer, too.

Off to school
We go together,
In September's
Sunny weather.



Two and Three these expectations must be clear and thoroughly understood. Don't make any rule/routine you are not prepared to enforce or re-teach each and every time it is broken.

The First Week

1. Have your Dayplan Book done thoroughly for the first week or more. Have lots to do — more than you think you will possibly need. Your students will either do far more than you think they will or much less.

2. Do all photocopying, make flashcards, and have everything ready.

Name Tags:

“I laminate my name tags. I have a primary font program on my computer (with lines and an inter-line) and I typed each child's name on their desk nametag. They look much neater this way!”

My name is _____,
I'll be your teacher soon.
I can't wait to meet you,
And show you our new room!

There's so much to learn in grade __,
We've lots of great things to do,
It is going to be a very special year,
For an awesome child like you!!

Love, _____

“I made my own desk tags (we call them license plates!) on the computer and printed them on coloured construction paper. They each had the student's name, a number line and the alphabet. I covered them on both sides with clear contact plastic. Then I put a piece of Velcro tape on the back and the matching piece on the table. That way, the tag stayed put but when the students changed desks they could take the tag with them. The velcro comes off with a little Goo Gone.”

“I mail one piece of a 25 piece puzzle to each child on my class list. I buy two identical puzzles in case someone forgets to return the piece. I number the pieces first so we know if any are missing. I send the piece home with this little poem.

On the first day we complete the puzzle. “See how we fit together? One student missing would ruin the picture!”, etc. This is the first step to building community in the classroom.”

Meghan's Ideas (K):

“I cut up strips of paper and put the kids names on them. Then the first day of school the kids decorate the strip with felts and a sticker and I staple it into a hat. I keep the hats for a few days until I've learned everyone's name.

I have a circle paper necklace that is really easy to make that says ‘I survived the first day of Kindergarten’ that they get to wear home that day. It could also say ‘I survived the first week’. The kids just colour in the little picture and cut out the circle (after I've talked about scissor safety).

For the first few days, I set up a mini-chalkboard, chalk, a brush and their name tag on the carpet for each child. The children learn that this is the first thing that they do every time they come in to the classroom. Initially, I have them print their name once and then they can draw a picture but eventually we do lots of things on our chalkboards - print our names, letters, numbers, shapes, and directed drawings.



Tip:

You will likely have a label program on your computer. Make up labels with the children's names. Use these on books, supplies, coat-hooks, library cards, - there are so many uses! You can colour the background on the computer or buy coloured labels. Peel-and-stick labels are a big time-saver!

I like to have a theme of greeting, and something I did that I thought was cool was to have the large bulletin board animals (about 24 + inches long...but most sizes would work) and I would fill up some spaces with them and have word bubbles coming out of their mouth. I would put them like where I put the word wall because otherwise it would be empty. I would put them in places where I wanted to have children's work up as soon as we could create some, and I also wanted the children to be part of where things went in the room. This way it looked cute and inviting, but I had things up that weren't meant to stay. An example was a squirrel carrying a nut...and he said something about he couldn't wait until lunch...or he was glad it was ___:___ (whatever time your lunch is) because he was hungry. I had an animal with a book and he said, 'I can't wait until reading time!' or 'I can't wait until I learn to read' ... something appropriate. I had one say something about math, writing, etc.



I copied their pictures from last year off the permanent record folders and put them on whatever my greeting bulletin board was. For example, TWINKLE, TWINKLE, LITTLE STARS and I had their pictures in the middle of stars. You could put their pictures on bees for 'Busy Bees in Room_____'. I always thought they liked seeing themselves and the people in their class right away.

I sent home a welcoming letter in the later part of summer and told them to bring a special thing on their first day back. I always took pictures on the first day of them with their special thing. We did sharing at the same time we reviewed listening circle-time rules. I would break it up into groups. I let them keep their special thing with them the first day (if it was appropriate), and they knew it was just for the day. It made some of them feel more comfortable coming back to school that first day.

I always had a welcoming pencil on their desks WITH their name on it.

I did the 'Monster Comes to School' story and did follow-up activity about why we need rules."

The First Days

Make a Time Capsule:

"I teach Grade Two. On the first day of school we make a time capsule. The students are asked to bring an empty paper towel roll (I have a few extra) or a Pringles can and begin their first day by decorating a piece of construction paper that will cover the roll with their name and a picture. Then they spend the day doing the things that go into the capsule.

They put in a tracing of their hand, a self-portrait and we measure each student and put in the height. This can be in a number or cut a piece of non-stretchable string to show the height. The students fill in a sheet that asks about their favourite book, movie, toy, shoe size, friend, activity, TV show, etc.

Then the items are put into the tube, the ends are sealed and they are put away until the last day of school. It is fun to remind them of their time capsule goals throughout the year. They have such fun on the last day opening them!"

Make a seating chart:

Buy the smallest pack of sticky notes that you can find. Then make a wall chart that shows your desks or tables, with room for the size of note for each one. When you have the students settled, write a name on each note and stick it into the desk space. These are fast and easy to change and your seating chart will always be up-to-date.

A name puzzle:

Go to www.puzzlemaker.com , select 'wordsearch' and put in all your students' names. This is a good 'getting to know you' activity for Grade 2 and 3.

Tip:



"At the end of the first week of school I give each child a tiny bag that says, 'You have had a great first week of school - you deserve kisses and hugs!' I put two Hershey Kisses and two Hugs in each little bag. This is always a hit!"

The first day in Grade One

“We discuss the school and classroom rules and talk about being safe and being good friends to one another. We go on a tour of the classroom and I read all the charts and poems. (We will do this every day until all the students have memorized the words and the charts and poems can be used for ‘read the room’.) We tour the school.

We begin to enforce the routines on the first day, too. They need to be repeated and repeated and practiced until the students do them automatically.

I begin my phonics program on the first day by teaching the letter A. We talk about the letter name and the letter sound. The children practice making the letter - lower and upper case - on the individual white boards. We brainstorm words that begin with the /a/ sound. We do a chart with the words ‘I’ and ‘am’, and the children fill in a paper with their names - ‘I am ____.’ and draw a picture of themselves. We read this over and over, and they touch each word as they read.

I have the children play with the math manipulatives, and I go around and ask each one to count a group of manipulatives. This gives me an idea of who will need help with this.

I read a couple of books, too. This is a full day of things to do, and the students feel that Grade One is serious and that they have done lots of work! I make notes of the things I see - my first idea of their abilities.”

Take digital pictures:

On the first day, take digital pictures of your students. For Kindergarten or Grade One children, print each picture with the student’s name below on 8 1/2 x 11 paper. (If you don’t have access to a digital camera, you could also take a picture of each child holding his/her name and have the photos ready to share the next day. Glue each picture to a larger sheet of paper.) Bind these together into a book. The kids will love looking through it and learning the names of their classmates.

For Grade Two and Three students, take the photos and have them write several sentences about themselves. You could type these sentences below the photos and print them. Again, bind them into a book that all the students will treasure.



A school tour



We do this in the morning on the first day of school. I take my class on a tour. I have done this in Kindergarten and in Grade Two, so it adapts to any grade level. In Kindergarten I invited the parents to join us.

We began by visiting the office to meet the secretary and the principal. I took a digital picture of each person. Each person we met said a few words about their job and the children asked questions. Then we went to the library and met the librarian, to the computer lab and met the teacher there. When the students had different teachers for PE or music, we went to meet them.

Then we visited the gym, the playground and even the bathrooms!

During lunch hour I downloaded the pictures, put each onto a simple outline of a school. The older students had a sentence or two with each picture, and the younger ones had a word or two. Then I printed them in black and white. I photocopied them and we made a shape book, with a page for each place we visited.

Things To Do Before School Begins

1. Prepare a class list
2. Get students' information - addresses, birthdates, parents' names, etc. Put this into files, hard copy and the computer.
3. Send a postcard or letter to the students (optional)
4. Make name tags for desks, coat hooks, cubbies, mailboxes, etc.
5. Make a welcome bulletin board
6. Arrange desks and other classroom furniture
7. Make a seating chart that is easily changed (with Velcro, wipe-off, etc.)
8. Put up the alphabet and numbers
9. Decorate the classroom so it looks welcoming and attractive
10. Prepare the word wall
11. Prepare the calendar and opening exercise area
12. Thoroughly prepare lessons for the first day - over-prepare....
13. Prepare lessons for the first week - tentatively
14. Prepare student files
15. Organize supplies
16. Make sheets of computer labels for each student to put on books and other supplies
17. Begin a folder or binder for substitutes
18. Organize the classroom library
19. Know what the classroom rules will be
20. Know your strategies for handling classroom and hall movement, pencil sharpening, washrooms, etc.
21. Make a computer template for weekly newsletter
22. If you have a class handbook, edit and photocopy
23. Understand school rules and emergency procedures
24. Have books picked to read to the class.
25. Make the classroom attractive with plants or flowers
26. Get a good night's sleep!



Making Tables

Tables can be used for your planbook, for making flashcards easily, and for making class lists and mark sheets to print and put in a binder. Here's how:

Open Word. Go under 'Table' and then to 'Insert Table'.

It will ask the number of columns and the number of rows. Click on OK.

You can also choose the Table AutoFormat to make different looking tables.

You can move any line in the table by putting the cursor on it and clicking when you see two little lines. Hold down the cursor and move the line.

Change the number of rows or columns by putting your cursor on the table beside what you want done, clicking on 'Table' and then go to 'Insert' or 'Delete' and then to the row or column, before or after.

Change the font and font size as you would in Word, highlighting the entire table first. Center the print. Print in the desired cell and use the tab to move from cell to cell if you wish.

To make flashcards, pull the corner of the table until it completely fills the page, and test to see the large font size and how many cards you want on the page. You may want the page in 'landscape' rather than 'portrait' - change it under 'File' and then 'Page Setup'.

Before you begin to write anything in a completed table, do a 'Save as...' and then write in the new one. This way you will always have the template.

my	the
go	to
street	park
house	car

The First Day

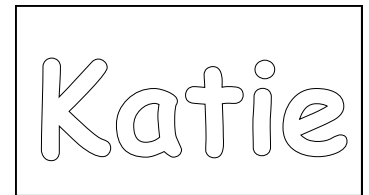
Fun With Names

“I read the Kevin Henkes book, ‘Chrysanthemum’. We talk about names. Who has the longest name in the class? Who has the shortest name? How many letters are in your name? We graph the number of letters in the names. Then we decorate our names on bubble letters.”

“I like to give each of my students their name in bubble letters. I have it set up on my computer, so if I have unexpected students on the first morning, I can easily print off the names. Here’s how I do it:

Open Word, and choose a font. I like Comic Sans and I also have a primary font that I like - but any font that has the simple primary a and g will do. Turn the page to ‘Landscape’. I print the name and make the font size as large as possible - usually between 200 and 300. Then go under ‘Format’ to ‘Font’ and then down and check the square in front of ‘Outline’. This makes the bubble letters. I print them off, and have the children colour them. When I taught Grade Two, I had the kids colour them in fantastic ways, cut them out, too, and assemble them again slightly overlapped from top to bottom - but early Grade One kids are not usually that good at cutting!

I cut out the name shapes (after school) and make a bulletin board of them.”



“In my Kindergarten class I have lots of die-cut letters in different colours. The kids pick out the letters in their names and then glue them together vertically, just barely overlapping. This is interesting, as I can soon see who knows how to spell the name, who can read but not spell it and who does not know the letters at all. When they are assembled, I laminate them and then they are hung from the ceiling.”

“On the first day of school, I read ‘The Important Book’, by Margaret Wise Brown. It’s a fun, repetitive book that tells the important thing about many things. We talk about the format, and re-read, the kids helping to ‘read’ the pages. Then I give the children a page format with ‘The important thing about (name) is’ and they complete it with a picture above the words. Then we do the last page, which is: But, the most important thing about our class is’ We brainstorm all the ideas why our class is so important, and then vote on the favourite. We put the book together and put it in the classroom library.”

“In Grade Three I introduce a ‘Word of the Day’ each day. This is to increase their listening, oral and reading vocabularies. I try to find words that will be new to most of the students. The first day I use the word ‘unique’ and the sentence ‘Everyone is unique’. We discuss the meaning of the word and then each student prints a paragraph explaining how he/she is unique.

I sometimes get stuck thinking of the word of the day - and find that this website helps!

<http://nces.ed.gov/nceskids/wordofday.asp>

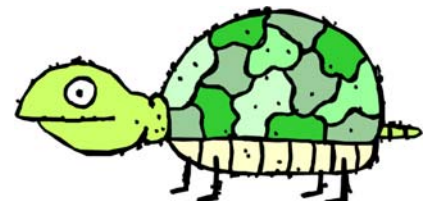
I also go into the favourite books of the class and find tricky words - palatial, levitation, scarlet, organic, etc.”

“If you are a Jan Brett ‘Hedgie’ fan, there are some colouring pages for back-to-school on her website: **www.janbrett.com** Go to ‘Colouring Pages’ and then ‘Friendship’.”

Have a look at these two, or explore more on the main site.

<http://www.teachingheart.net/firstdaylessons.html>

<http://www.teachingheart.net/backtoschoolprintables.html>



The First Day

Will you get your last year's class on the first day of school? Have them write about their year to tell your new students what they will be doing and learning. Begin sentences, such as 'Ms. _____ likes to _____.' 'She gets upset if you don't _____.' 'In math we learned _____.' It was _____.' Etc.

Then for your first day with your new children, here are some ideas:

Play the 'Name Game': Sit everyone in a circle. The teacher begins with, "My name is _____, and I like to _____". The student to the right of the teacher repeats, "Her (the teacher) name is _____ and she _____." My name is _____ and I like to _____." Repeat just what the person before you said, around the circle.

Read **Chrysanthemum** by Kevin Henkes. "*Chrysanthemum is a cute mouse with a very beautiful name. Chrysanthemum is the name of a flower. She is happy to go to Kindergarten. Her name has 13 letters! That is half of the letters in the alphabet, one of her classmates points out!*" Discuss the length of Chrysanthemum's name. How many letters are in each of your students' names? Give them their names in bubble font, and have each count the letters. Can they read the letters out to the class? Make a simple graph to show the number of letters in the names. Ask grade suitable questions: How many children have names with 5 letters? Who has the most? Who has the least? How many more letters does ___ have than ___? Decorate the names for a bulletin board graph.

"Each week one of the students is the 'Star'. On the first week of school, I am the start person. I have a star student board, and each week that person fills the board with information about his/her family, friends, pets, favourite things, favourite places, etc. to share with the rest of the class and bring in pictures and show and tell things. I do it the first week to show how it is done, and the children learn a bit about my life."

Take the students' pictures the first day. Now with digital cameras, these are easy to do and can be used immediately. Take them against a plain background. These can be printed either in colour or in black and white and in a variety of sizes for different purposes - large and in colour for bulletin boards, small for graphing, black and white to make a book of classmates for the first week, memory books for the end of the year, etc.

"Writing Activity - Read *Today I Feel Silly, and Other Moods that Make My Day*, by Jamie Lee Curtis. This is a very funny story and the children always get a kick out of the main character's moods! After reading this story, have the children write about how they are feeling. Start them off with: "We read Today I ... today on the first day of second grade. Last night I felt _____. I felt _____ when I was getting ready this morning. Right now I feel _____ and I am feeling _____ about second grade. I then have them add on a couple more sentences on their own...Once they are finished, I let them illustrate their mood on a blank face die-cut. The children are then allowed to share what they have written. This is also a good informal writing assessment to see how they are writing. Before starting this activity, tie it in with the first Writer's Workshop mini-lesson to let students know expectations for their writing."

For grade two of three classes, do a class survey. There is a sample survey at <http://www.abcteach.com/Backtoschool/classsurvey.htm>
The students go around the room and find out things about their classmates.

Of course, younger students may need a tour of the school. Practice lining up and model how we walk in the halls and what to do in the washrooms, etc.

Make a class book. It could be modeled on the book *Mary Wore a Red Dress* by Merle Peek. Make a book with each page saying a child's name and a self-portrait: _____ wore a _____ _____ on the first day of school.



More First Day Ideas

“I want to tell you what I do on the first day of school with my new students. At our school this happens on the second day of school because on the first half day, our last year students come to us. It is such a great time to see the kids and find out what they did for the summer. It also puts the children under less anxiety as they are going back to their old classroom and teacher and it seems to be easier for them to come to school under a new situation. But anyway, it always seems that the children are comfortably sitting in their chairs ready to listen to me for instructions and the classroom walls are lined up with anxious parents not knowing what to do. So I say to the children to go give Mom and Dad a hug and kiss, say goodbye and we will see you after school. So the children get up and do just that and the parents leave wondering what to do with themselves now that the children are at school all day. I have only had one dad ever say to me that ‘you sure got us out of there’. I responded that he was welcome to come any time he wanted to join us but it looked like most of you were kind of uncomfortable and didn't really know what to do but were having difficulty leaving the children who seemed to be comfortable, settling in and ready to spend some time with me and able to let mom and dad go for a while. It really does work and even some reluctant children follow the pack and say good bye for the short time that they are at school. It also seems to set the tone for the rest of the year for most parents and children. I have told many teachers what I do on the first day and they seem pleased with the idea and have tried it and let me know that it works. I am sure that this is not a new idea but possibly someone has not heard of it and wants to try it.” *Carol*

“We always read the room on the first day, and every day or second day after that until the students are able to do it themselves. I use a ‘magic’ wand to point to the words as we read. After that I encourage the children to read what words they can and they can use the wand or other fancy pointers or glasses to help them. (The Dollar Store is a big help when looking for these!)

“I always have my Grade One students do some ‘work’ on the first day. I have them print their names, and as many letters and numbers as they can - and even words if they know any.

When I taught Grade Two and Three, I had them write a story about their summer. We talk about it first and think about the most exciting or important things that happened during the holiday. The stories gave me insight into their writing levels.”

“First, I introduce myself and tell the children something about myself. We go over the class and the school rules. We go over our classroom procedures - how to look after supplies, how to line up, how to come to the reading corner and how to behave there. We discuss after school procedures, too. We read the room and talk about the different areas in the classroom.

I always do some ‘work’ on the first day, and some art or craft project, too, and this goes up on a bulletin board to make the classroom personal. We play ‘Heads Up, Seven Up’ (an old favourite), and ‘Sparkle’ to practice counting.

We begin our calendar activities - as this is Day One, and go through the calendar procedures. I always have at least one book to read to the class and a simple activity to go with it.”

“I introduce my students to my number system - every child gets a number in alphabetical order and keeps it all year. We practice finding that number on the coat hooks and cubbies, and line up by numbers. Number One is the leader of the line today - tomorrow #2 will be the leader and #1 goes to the back of the line.”

“I read *The Important Book* by Margaret Wise Brown. The children trace their head and shoulders and decorate them to look like they do. Then they fill in this prompt:

The important thing about me is that I am _____. I can _____
and _____. I like _____ and _____.
But the important thing about me is that I am _____.



Getting To Know You

Names, names (K, 1):

Buy foam letters and the students make a name plate for their desks - or - have the students use alphabet beads to make bracelets. Make the names using different stencils. Use the computer to make names using primary font.

Print the names in fingerpaint.

Use alphabet sponges to print names.

Names, names (2, 3):

Assign each letter of the alphabet a number (a = 1, b = 2, etc.). The students print their names in the code and put them in a hat. Then each takes one out and spells the name and takes it to the original student. They can add the numbers to make their own totals.

Do a name glyph. The student follows directions to complete his code. The student traces wide letter stencils to spell his name on a paper strip or two strips taped together. Trim any excess length. The student decorates his name by the code, using desired colours for the indicated patterns.

After all students have completed their glyphs, they can challenge one another to interpret the glyphs. These can be laminated and used as desk tags.

The Code:

First Letter of your name: Are you a boy or girl? If you are a boy make diagonal lines across the first letter and if you are a girl make a grid pattern

Second letter of your name: Do you have any brothers or sisters? yes = red, no = green

Third letter: Do you have a pet? no = make dots on your letter, yes = colour the letter the colour of your pet

Fourth letter: Which subject do you like the most? reading = red, math = blue, science = green, social studies = purple, art = orange, music = yellow, other = brown

Fifth letter: How do you get to school? walk = yellow, bus = purple, car = red, van = orange, other = green

Sixth letter: Do you like to read? yes = make small coloured circles on the letter, no = make small coloured triangles on the letter

Seventh letter: Do you like sports? yes = make small yellow stars on the letter, no = make small black stars on your letter.

If you have more than seven letters in your name, colour the eighth letter like the first one. Colour the ninth letter like the second one, and so on.

You can put this code onto a sheet and have the students circle the answer to the question and then do the colouring of their stencilled name.

Chrysanthemum

Read the book *Chrysanthemum* by Kevin Henkes. The students discuss why their name is absolutely perfect. Write: My name is _____ and it is absolutely perfect because _____.

This can be displayed with a picture on a bulletin board to begin the year.



Name Math

Make a class graph of the numbers of letters in the names. Find out how many letters are in all of the names together. Sort the names and then guess how they have been sorted. (vowel sounds, number of letters, number of syllables etc.)

Getting To Know You!



Student's Full Name: _____ Nickname: _____

Parent's Name: _____ Address _____

Phone Number _____ Alternate Phone Number _____

The following information will be kept private, and is only to help me to understand your child better.

Does your child speak more than one language? Which ones?

Does your child have any medical conditions or allergies that I should be made aware of?

What are some of your child's favourite things to do? Does he/she have any hobbies?

What are your child's special interests?

Does your child enjoy being read to? What are some of your child's favorite books?

Write a few adjectives that come to mind that describe your child (include strengths and weaknesses).

What are your child's talents?

What time does your child go to sleep at night? Is he/she frequently tired by afternoon?

Does your child have any siblings? If yes, what are their names, ages, and grades if they go to school?

What else would you like me to know about your child? Do you have any concerns?

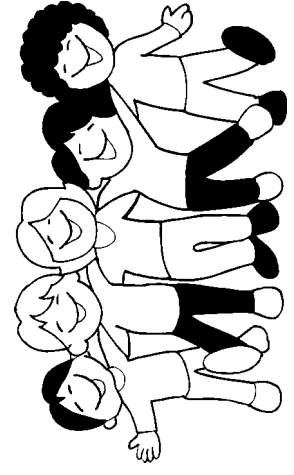
(Use the back of the page.)

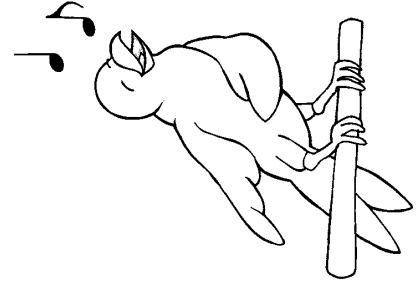
Thank you! I appreciate your confidence. _____

a b c d e f g h i j k l m

n o p q r s t u v w x y z

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9





A Class Handbook

A class handbook can be done with the ABCs! Find a word or words for each letter that are suitable for the information you wish your parents to have. Many of the sections and ideas have come from Marilyn. Thanks!

THE ABC'S OF GRADE 1 !

A - Agenda The agenda book will be required to be taken home every day and brought back the next day. The front of the agenda contains a plastic bag which will contain unfinished work to be completed, notes from us, spelling tests, notes from the school etc. Please check it and empty it every night. The rest of the agenda contains information that you will need to know about the school.

- Absence If your child will be absent, please call the office (Phone #) and inform us of the reason for it.
- Attendance Regular attendance is important to a successful school year.
- Arrival and Dismissal

B - Book Orders A Scholastic book order form will be sent home once a month. If you wish to buy books, please return the form with a cheque made out to Scholastic books within a week of receiving the order form.

- Backpacks They help your child carry books, messages and information to and from school, you are asked to provide a backpack.

- Birthdays
- Breakfast Please ensure that your child has eaten a healthy breakfast. Children need this energy to learn.

C - Clean We do a lot of different activities that may become messy. Please don't send your child in clothes that shouldn't get dirty. A paint shirt helps too - preferably send one with short sleeves as long sleeves fall into the paint (an old adult-shirt is good).

D - Discipline The school rules are - be respectful (to everyone and everything), be responsible (for his/her own actions/progress), be ready (on time, with all required materials). Grade 1's also need to listen and do their best.

E - Envelopes When sending money (cash or cheque) to school, please put it in a sealed envelope labeled with your child's name, what the money is for, and the teacher's name. This insures all the money gets to school and we know what to do with it.

- E-mail You may reach me at my e-mail address which I check each day.
- Emergency Closings If schools are closed for a snow day or any emergency, radio station _____ or the local TV stations (Channels _____) will make an announcement, generally by 7:00 A.M.

F - Field Trips We go on one or two field trips every year.

- Fire drills These are held once each month.

G - Gym Classes will be held on Tuesday and Thursday. Girls should be wearing pants on those 2 days. Your child will also need runners for the gym. Since your child needs indoor and outdoor shoes, the indoor shoes should be runners.

H - Hours of school School begins at Lunch time is School is over at

- Health Please let me know of special circumstances which may affect your child. These could include medication, allergies or other conditions.

- Home Reading Discuss your home reading program.
- Homework - We expect that the children will read at home each night. Other homework may include work not completed in class, learning spelling words, doing math drill sheets, etc.

I - Illness Any medication your child needs will be given in the office and must be brought with a note giving detailed instructions as to how and when to administer.

- Inside days Children will be allowed to stay indoors in inclement weather.
- Inside shoes These shoes are kept at school. Please try to have shoes that your child can easily put on with velcro fasteners.

J - Juice, Water, Snacks Each day we will have a scheduled 5 minute snack time before our morning recess. Please send a small nutritious snack with your child (a piece of fruit, granola bar, small yogurt, cheese and crackers, carrot sticks, celery etc.). Try to send things that are easy to open and not messy. Also, send a water bottle - preferably one that will not spill.

- Journals We will do Journals several times each week where the children write about the things they are doing through the days.

K - Kindness Students in our classroom are encouraged and expected to treat everyone with kindness and respect. Bothering others, bullying and interrupting learning will not be permitted.

L - Library A library period will be given on Fridays. Books will need to be returned every Friday.
- Lunches We eat lunches in the classroom. Please send nutritious lunches.

M - Music We learn many songs through the year. Ask your child to sing them to you!
- Milk sales The school sells milk and juice for lunch for 5 days each week.

N - No toys No toys are allowed at school.
- Newsletters A weekly newsletter will be sent home to keep you informed of our activities.

O - Outdoor time We have two recess times each day. Most of the time the children are outside and should be dressed for the weather.

P - Portfolios We are creating a portfolio of work for each student which will be sent home on a monthly basis.
- Parent Interviews - Parent/teacher interviews will be held in November and March.
- Parties We will have class parties for Halloween and Valentines Day.

Q - Questions Anytime you have a concern or question, you may contact us by writing in the agenda or phoning the school at _____ from to (a.m./p.m.) or e-mailing me at

R - Report Cards Report cards will be sent home in November, March and June.
- Recess All children are expected to go outdoors at recess unless the weather is inclement.
- Room Parent

S - Special Day Each student will have a special day on a rotational basis - approximately one day every month. For September, each child will get a paper bag labeled "Me in a Bag". Place 3 or 4 items in the bag which tell about your child - pictures or small toys or ornaments. Your child will then talk about each item and how it relates to him.
- Spelling tests - Spelling will start in October. 5 words will be sent home each week and a test given on Fridays.
- Show and tell Your child will have one special day each week to bring something to share. No toys, please!
- Supplies You will be notified when your child is running short of supplies and you will be asked to replenish these as promptly as possible.

T - Tooth and Birthday Book Bags The Lost Tooth and Birthday bags celebrate those special days. Your child will get a Birthday book bag at the time of his birthday. If your child's birthday is in the summer, we'll have a special time to send the bag home. The Lost Tooth bag is, of course, given when your child loses a tooth. Each bag contains books to read and a journal to write in about the experience of losing a tooth or having a birthday.

U - Units of study The monthly newsletter will explain what will be taught in the major subjects that month.

V - Volunteers For those of you who wish to volunteer, please fill in the form in this newsletter and we will set up a schedule. We also use volunteers on special days (Hallowe'en, last day before Christmas ...)
- Visitors All visitors to the school must check in to the school office.

W - Words Every day, we'll be teaching and reinforcing the basic sight words for reading and spelling. 5 sight words will be written in your child's agenda each week. Please practice them with your child.

- Website Our class has a website at

- Wish List Our class has a wish list of things we need or can use in the classroom. Some may be purchased and some are recycled things. These will be in the weekly newsletter.

X - An eXtra set of clothes It is very important that you send an extra set of clothes in case of an accident.
- XXXIII - this is how many children in our class!

Y - You You are your child's most important teacher! Encourage their education by working with us and forming a positive relationship.

Z - ZZZzzz's: Make sure that your child gets plenty of rest. Setting and keeping a bedtime is a wonderful gift you can give your child. It will help them be ready to learn and alert every day.



Beginning Assessment - Grade One

“During the first two or three days of school, sit with each child (the others are drawing, looking at books, using math manipulatives or doing puzzles, etc.) and test them on the following items. It helps if you have an aide or parent volunteer to answer questions and help the other class members.

1. Can they read the alphabet, upper and lower case? (not in alphabetical order)
2. Do they know the sounds the letters make?
3. Can they read numbers from 1 to 10 and higher? (use a sheet that has the numbers on it, not in counting order ... all the numbers from 1 to 10, plus other larger numbers).
4. How high can they count, by rote?
5. How high can they count objects? (use 2 bowls and 100 teddy bear or other interesting counters, and have them count as they move them from one bowl to the other).
6. Do they know the names of all the colours? (use a sheet with colour circles, and ask them to say the colour names as you point to them).
7. Do they know their shapes?
8. Do they know their first and last name, address, phone number, and birthday?
10. Can they read any sight words? (I have a sheet with 18 or 20, easy ones like the, it, he, was, like, can).
11. I hand him/her a Level 1/Level A book, and ask him to read it to me. I usually hand it to the child upside down, so that I can see what he know about concepts about print. If he CAN read it, I give him progressively harder books to find out at what level he is reading. If he cannot read it, read a page to the child and ask him to read it back, pointing to each word as he repeats it – to see if he understands the concept of separate words.



All of this takes 10 to 15 minutes per student, and it allows me to quickly group my kids for reading and math small group instruction. Many of the skills above are kindergarten skills, but many of our children don't master them by the end of kindergarten. If they are VERY wiggly and inattentive, I break their testing time into smaller segments.

I also do parts of the Marie Clay Observational Survey beginning the second week, because it gives me a better feeling for where they are. I test them again on alphabet knowledge, IF they didn't know all the letters and sounds the first time around. Using the OS, they get a point each for knowing: the letter name, the sound it makes, a word that begins with that letter. For example, many kids will look at the letter B and say 'bear'. That's worth one point, and it may be all they know.

Before I start my assessment, I explain to the kids that “Mrs. Smith is CLOSED when she's working one-on-one with a child, and you can only interrupt me for ‘B’ emergencies.” B emergencies are bathroom, blood, and barf! They learn to respect my time with other kids, and they can almost always wait the few minutes it takes until I'm free to talk to them and help them with whatever they need. And they LOVE the idea of B emergencies.

It is helpful to ask the child a few questions. The answers will give you some insight.

- Does someone read stories to you at home?
- What is reading?
- Can you read?
- What is your favourite book??"

Teaching from K to 3



Teaching **Kindergarten** is exhausting! When you first get these wee ones, they are still pre-schoolers. They will need to be taught everything, from how to sit in a circle to how to use the washrooms. Some will have an attention span of only a couple of minutes, and those who have watched a lot of fast moving TV will be bored and fidgety if there isn't movement or action.

Five year olds are generally good, helpful, and conforming. They need a lot of attention, affection, and praise. Hugs are needed. They may not want to try things that are new. They are very energetic. They may show opposite extremes of behaviour and may become less well-behaved as the school year progresses. They are still learning socially, and may need direction in sharing, politeness and behaviour in social situations.

Kindergarten teachers have a lot of patience and love! The Kindergarten curriculum is changing, and now there is more that the children are expected to know by the end of the year. This means less play and more teacher-directed activities. It is physically draining and Kindergarten teachers should be applauded!

Grade One teachers are often dedicated to this special grade! There is a huge reward when you see the progress the children make. They are like little sponges just soaking up everything you put out there for them to learn. They are enjoyable to teach and very funny. They like silly jokes and silly stories. They come to you as Kindergarten children, and it is up to you to transform them into readers and writers. At the beginning of the year you must assume that they know nothing (where were the kindergarten teachers last year?), and any skill you may discover they have is a bonus. You will spend the first month teaching them how to cut, how to use glue bottles, how NOT to sharpen a pencil, and how to tear a page out of the math book - this may take more than an hour. Grade Ones still need hugs, help to find missing books and assistance to do up zippers. Tattling is second nature. Everything is new and exciting and their enthusiasm is contagious.

It is hard work. Grade One teachers learn to put all routines and lessons into simple steps, and repeat everything over and over. Attention spans are still short and lessons must change direction every ten or fifteen minutes or you lose them. Silence rarely happens - a six year old is murmuring even when quiet, and twenty six year old students produce a hum that is difficult to extinguish. You will never have time in class to think about what you are going to do next, and inexperienced Grade One teachers find this difficult.

After saying all that, Grade One is the most rewarding grade. What they know at the end of the year - you have taught them! You need lots of patience, a good sense of humour, a big bag of tricks for getting and keeping their attention and lots of energy. Even then, you will be drained at the end of the day.

Grade Two teachers will receive children who are still Grade Ones. Some will not know how to read, so you wonder what the Grade One teacher was doing. You must be able to teach beginning readers beside the good readers in your class. Many will not know the basics, so much of Grade Two is spent teaching Grade One skills again. Grade Two children are chatty, helpful, fun, whiny, tattletales, teacher worshipers, non-readers, chapter book readers, non-writers, story book writers.... You'll get a bit of everything! Grade Two is a transitional year and a wonderful age. They are somewhat independent but mostly still very innocent. They are cooperative and eager to please. They are old enough to understand jokes.

You will take these little Grade One people who come to you at the end of the year and turn them into Grade Threes! By the end of the year they are much more mature and capable. Grade Two is fun to teach!

Grade Three children are changing. They can work on their own, and the teachers can have time each day to think ahead while the children are working. Grade Threes are sometimes young children. They will still listen raptly to a picture book and do crafts with pleasure. But now you can see changes - sometimes boys and girls will hold hands and you must make a rule that there cannot be violence in their written stories. There may be bullies in your group, and this may cause hurt and upset in the class. Grade Threes love to write long stories and read the simple chapter books. They will work independently and love to learn difficult math procedures.

Most Grade Three children are very sweet. They are still primary kids, but by the end of the year you will see the independence and maturity grow. You will love this grade!