

Preparing to Launch



If you are fully prepared for the first day of school, you will be relaxed and ready to handle whatever takes place. Take meaningful steps to prepare for an effective launch of your Classroom Management Plan and Day 1 with your new group of students.

- Complete your Classroom Management Plan (*CHAMPS* Reproducible 1.1/*DSC* Exhibit 1.1) and review with an administrator if appropriate. Include any building nonnegotiables and expectations (anything required by the administrator/building or district team, such as tardy policy, attendance, common area behaviors, etc.).
- Secondary (middle and high school):
 - Draft your syllabus (*CHAMPS* Figure 9.1, p. 400/*DSC* Exhibit 9.2, p. 347).
 - Align your Classroom Management Plan with your syllabus.
- Make a sign for your room:
 - Large enough to see from a distance
 - Include name, subject, room number
- Seating assignment considerations:
 - Is seating chart desired or required? We recommend using a seating chart to put students who do not know others or may not have friends in the room at ease.
 - Use numbers/names/photos? Project the seating chart on the board/screen?

NOTE: It is acceptable and expected that initial seating arrangements will be changed after a few class periods, and you can seek student input on who they might like to sit next to or work with as you design the next seating chart.
- Identify and prepare for opening activity that allows you to greet students as they enter.
 - Key components: purposeful, independent, sets tone that when students are in class, they are engaged in work
 - > Lower elementary: coloring sheets/crayons
 - > Upper elementary: general information, open-ended questions
 - > Secondary: subjects they like the most/least, favorites, manner of feedback preferred, interests/strengths/needs inventory
- Develop a modified schedule for the first day:
 - Helps students feel comfortable and settled
 - Communicate classroom goals, rules, guidelines, and expectations
 - Communicate any schoolwide rules and expectations
 - Deal with logistics such as distributing textbooks
- Parent considerations:
 - Elementary
 - > One liners for parents who want to take your time on Day 1
 - > Consider a written welcome letter with open house and family conference information, school and classroom expectation, FAQs, and preferred contact method, including how to schedule a meeting with you
 - Secondary
 - > Draft an orientation handout that contains school and classroom expectations, Guidelines for Success, FAQs, grading and homework information, and preferred contact method, including how to schedule a meeting time with you

First Day of School

Aim to create a comfortable, respectful, and positive experience for students on the first day of school. When the day is managed well, students will leave thinking, “This teacher is organized and friendly and expects a lot from us. This class will be a lot of work, but it should be exciting and fun. This teacher really wants to help me be successful!” Your goal is to conduct the first day of school in a way that will make students feel welcome and will help them learn how to behave responsibly right from the beginning (Moskowitz & Hayman, 1976).

- Greet students individually at the door.
- Ensure that your first day schedule is posted.
- Communicate essential information in the first 10 minutes.
- Teach your attention signal (*CHAMPS*, p. 75/*DSC*, p. 67) and expectations for any activities or transitions that will occur during the class period using TOF (refer to *CHAMPS*, p. 412/*DSC*, p. 356 for effective positive feedback).
- Respond to misbehavior using preplanned instructional corrections (-ly words). (See *CHAMPS*, p. 414/*DSC*, p. 357.)
- Be calm and be positive!

Days 2–20 (the First Four Weeks)

In the first month of school, continue investing time and energy into building a positive classroom environment and clarity of expectations. Students should dive right into engaging and meaningful instructional activities, so ensure you spend adequate time communicating expectations and verifying that students understand what is expected of them. While these efforts will occur throughout the school year, the first 20 days are a critical time to establish the routines and working relationships that will set the stage for a productive year.

- Use positive interactions often. Smile at students, learn their names with correct pronunciation, and work to get to know them beyond their academic abilities or needs. Give frequent positive feedback about what students are doing well or when you notice them making efforts toward expected behaviors.
- Use attention signal any time you need the whole group to receive instruction.
- For the first 2–3 weeks, continue to begin each activity and transition with a lesson on expectations (as the month progresses, these can be increasingly brief as students demonstrate behavior aligned with expectations—focus only on those specific behaviors that need addressing).
- Watch each time for the behaviors you taught by observing students as they complete the transitions and activities. Provide high levels of positive feedback, both verbal and nonverbal. Provide consistent mild corrections that are primarily instructional rather than punitive in nature as you work to establish expectations for the class.
- Verify student understanding about class and school expectations through a written quiz or one-on-one/small group interviews.