

Creating a *Priming Plan*

What would get the school year off to a powerful start?

- Students who are inspired, motivated, and feeling good about their capabilities
- Students who know how to use the structures of your classroom
- Teachers who understand each student's background knowledge, personality, interests, and dispositions toward learning
- Teachers who understand their class as a social entity; that is, which students work well together and who might have conflicts



That's the purpose of a *Priming Plan*: to prime your students for success by curating the atmosphere, an overall feeling or effect of a place, in your classroom from day one. Every activity in your *Priming Plan* should serve one of three goals: helping students learn how your classroom works; building their confidence and optimism about the year ahead; and giving you information about their skills, interests, and how they work with others, information you'll use to plan the work that follows.

A *Priming Plan* should last between one and two weeks. Use the reflection questions below to develop a *Priming Plan* for your students.

Getting Started

Think about **which** classroom structures are essential to your learning environment and **how** to organically introduce them to students.

- Which structures need to be in place from the start of the school year?
- Which structures are needed to create a positive and supportive culture in your classroom?
- How will you teach students to access physical and digital resources in the classroom that will support them throughout the year?
- How will you build a *felt need* for the use of the structures in your classroom?

Planning Your Classroom Design

As you consider your classroom design, begin by thinking about how you will arrange your physical and/or digital classroom to create a learning environment that builds student agency. Consider the following questions as you sketch your classroom:

- How will students use these collaborative workspaces to connect with one another?
- Which classroom areas can be flexible and repurposed by the students to accommodate their various learning needs?
- What are the expectations for students maintaining their individual workspace?
- Where will physical resources be located in the classroom?
- How is high-quality work showcased?
- Which diversity of thought leaders, images, families, and texts will be presented to students? Are they countering the existing stereotypes?

Understanding Your Students as Individuals

How will you help students reflect honestly on their own work habits and behavior, not just what you expect of them, but what they expect of themselves?

Consider building a simple self-assessment tool (in accessible, plain language, with visual supports for younger or multilingual learners) that lets students rate themselves on things such as following through on tasks, asking for help, and managing time, then set a personal goal. Revisit it partway through the plan so students can reflect on progress.

Understanding Your Students as a Group

How will you learn who works well together, who tends to need extra support in group settings, and who may need deliberate inclusion?

One approach is to ask each student privately to name a few classmates they'd like to work with, then map the responses to identify patterns: mutual pairs, natural leaders, and students who weren't named by anyone and may need intentional grouping. Use these insights, along with academic data, when forming your first working groups.

Landscape of Opportunities for Academically Rigorous Learning

Developing a plan to empower students and address their individual needs is an integral piece of building student responsibility in your classroom.

- How will you and your students discover their levels of background knowledge, understanding, or skill as it relates to your content area? How do you plan on using this information to improve student learning outcomes?
- How will you discover your students' interests, personalities, and dispositions toward learning? How do you plan to use this information to improve student learning outcomes?
- How will you and your students manage and track work?
- How will you and your students use formative assessment to monitor progress?
- How will you encourage students to become active decision-makers?

Creating a Partnership with Parents and Caregivers

Parents and other caregivers play a significant role in their children's education. Establishing proactive, regular communication with parents and caregivers about what and how their children are learning is a key ingredient for success. Capture a few ideas below for how you can start building that partnership.