

Scotland County School's

Beginning Teacher Toolkit





Beginning Teacher Toolkit

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Beginning of the Year

Open House

Open House is a great time to “meet & greet” your students and their guardians. Open House is not a Parent/Teacher Conference but a quick drop-in.

It is important to think ahead about what you will say and give to them at this time. What things are important for parents to know? Do students need specific materials for your class? Is there a newsletter to send home?

[Here is a sample handout](#) that can be utilized during Open House based on a plan for the year. The key is thinking & planning ahead!

First Day of School

The first day of school is filled with new names, new faces, handing out papers and teaching procedures and routines. It is important to think ahead about what needs to be covered, as it relates to school business, and what you would like to cover, as it pertains to your expectations.

School:

- School Rules/ PBIS Matrix
- Papers to send home
- Emergency Drills
- Grading Policy

Teacher:

- Introduce Yourself
- Class rules & procedures
- Year at-a-glance
- Materials/Organization

[-Sample First Day of School Agenda-](#)

First Two Weeks of School

There are several things that need to be established within the first two weeks of school to set the tone for the remainder of the year. It is recommended to not teach any content during the first two weeks of school because this time should be focused on establishing routines and procedures with students and explicitly teaching desired behaviors. Below you will find a sample outline to follow for the first two weeks of school. You may find it helpful to collaborate with your colleagues and team members to determine what will be covered explicitly for your *school*, *grade level*, and *team* expectations.

Week 1
Monday *see First Day of School agenda -Lockers & Locks (8th- High school)

Tuesday

- Revisit Behavior Expectations (PBIS Matrix) and focus on one area
- Teach **Beginning of the Day Routines***
- Practice Fire Drill

Wednesday

- Revisit Behavior Expectations (PBIS Matrix) and focus on one area
- Teach **Throughout the Day Routines***
- Practice Tornado Drill
- Icebreaker Activities
- (Examples: [Elementary](#); [Secondary](#))

Thursday

- Revisit Behavior Expectations (PBIS Matrix) and focus on one area
- Practice Lockdown Drill
- Lockers & Locks (6th-7th)
- Pre-Assessment (per content area--get with team members so students are not taking pre-assessments in all classes on the same day)

Friday

- Set up notebooks (if using)
- Teach **End of Day Routines***
- Organize binders & other school supplies

Week 2**Monday**

- Revisit Behavior Expectations (PBIS Matrix) and focus on one area
- Practice Fire Drill
- Set up journals (if using)
- Teach **Academic Routines***

Tuesday

- Revisit Behavior Expectations (PBIS Matrix) and focus on one area
- Practice Tornado Drill
- Tour the school (students demonstrate desired behaviors--correct if needed)

Wednesday

- Revisit Behavior Expectations (PBIS Matrix) and focus on one area
- Practice Lockdown Drill

Thursday

- Revisit Behavior Expectations (PBIS Matrix) and focus on one area

Friday

- Revisit Behavior Expectations (PBIS Matrix) and focus on one area

*Routines can be touched on as students go throughout the day but they will explicitly be taught on certain days.

Routines to Teach in the First Few Days of School	
<p style="text-align: center;">Beginning of the Day</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Getting off the bus • Entering school • Walking in hallways • Breakfast routine • Unpacking backpacks • Handing in work, notes from home • Where to put lunch/snacks • Entering classroom • What to do if you're late • Pledge, announcements • Morning meeting 	<p style="text-align: center;">End of the Day</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean Up • Retrieve folder • Grab Back Pack • Grab Lunch box • Grab coats/snow things • Stack Chairs • Meet together at carpet • Closing meeting • Last minute note • Lining up for the bus
<p style="text-align: center;">Throughout the Day Routines</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lining up for specials/lunch/fire drills • How to enter/exit the classroom for pull out services • Visitor entering the class • Behavior/routines at recess • Nurse • Bathroom • Getting the teacher's attention • Visual/verbal cues for getting attention • Transitioning to the carpet and back to the tables • Snack • How to transition in between subjects • Safe movement within classroom 	<p style="text-align: center;">Academic Routines</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner chatting • Listening to a read-aloud • How to get academic materials • What to do when work is complete • How to take turns (math games, partner <u>reading</u>) • How to <u>put away</u> materials when done • Using the classroom library • How to find a "just right" <u>book</u> • How to set up notebooks/papers • Choosing a "good" spot on the rug • What to do when the teacher is busy • How to communicate kindly (whisper buddy/partner)

Letter Home to Parents

It is important to establish a good rapport with parents at the beginning of the year. One thing that parents appreciate is being knowledgeable about teacher's expectations and material that will be covered throughout the year. Sending a letter home to parents can be a great communication tool to begin a working relationship between home and school. Letting parents know how they can help their child at home is imperative to student success. Below are a few exemplars of parent letters to send home at the beginning of the year:

[Exemplar 1](#)
[Exemplar 2](#)
[Exemplar 3](#)

Student Contact Sheets

Majority of schools send home contact forms at the beginning of the year for parents to update student information. However, it is important that teachers have their own updated contact forms for students as well. A copy can be made of the office forms before turning them in but another form may be needed for specific information needed by classroom teachers. [Here](#) is a sample contact form for classroom teacher records.

Additional Resources for Beginning of the Year

- <https://proudtobeprimary.com/first-week-of-school/>
- <http://neatoday.org/2016/07/26/tips-for-new-teachers/>
- <https://thesimplyorganizedteacher.com/first-week-of-school/>
- <https://2peasandadog.com/2018/08/first-week-of-school-activities-for-middle-school-students.html>
- <https://www.teachingintentionally.com/blog/2019/6/20/building-relationships-activities-for-the-first-week-of-middle-school>
- <https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/articles/teaching-content/classroom-activities-welcoming-back-middle-school-students/>
- <http://musingsfromthemiddleschool.blogspot.com/2018/08/first-week-of-school-plans.html>
- <https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/articles/teaching-content/critical-first-week-high-school/>
- <https://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/current/teaching/first-3-weeks>

Classroom Management

Strategies

Classroom management refers to how a teacher manages his/her classroom. Students need to know the expectations when they enter the room and teachers must explicitly teach and model these expectations and discuss rewards and consequences.

There are many classroom management strategies that work for different students as well as different teachers. One must determine which strategy he/she feels comfortable with to implement *and* sustain. Sometimes strategies may not work at first but students must be given time to adjust to a new way of doing things and meeting teacher expectations.

It is also important to collaborate with team members to determine which strategies are being used in other classrooms. This is not only helpful to teachers but is beneficial to students if multiple teachers can agree on the same classroom management plan. Below are several suggestions for classroom management. It is recommended to choose which strategies will work best and have a plan established *before* the first day of school.

- [General Strategies](#)
- Classroom Management--[Elementary](#)
- Classroom Management--[Middle](#)
- Classroom Management--[High](#)

Rules & Expectations

Rules and expectations set the stage & tone for how a classroom will run for the rest of the year. Rules and expectations should be clear, concise, and explicitly taught to students. It is best to choose 3-5 overarching rules that can be posted in the classroom. (*Some teachers choose to allow student input in creating rules before posting.*)

During the first few weeks of school, rules & expectations should be discussed and modeled for students. It is also a good practice to have class conversations to clarify possible misconceptions or expectations that are indirectly stated (Ex. Be Respectful → not only means to respect the teacher but also each other.)

Examples of Overarching Rules:

- Be Respectful (Respect adults, yourself, others, & property/materials)
- Give Your Best Effort
- Be on Time
- Come to Class Prepared
- Raise Your Hand to be Acknowledged (Also, consider using [Hand Signals](#))
- Listen When the Speaker is Speaking
- Follow Directions When Given
- Gum, Food, & Drinks are allowed at Lunch Only.

**Positively frame rules & expectations. Instead of “No Talking”, use “Listen to Speaker Quietly” instead.

Behavior Log

It is important to document student behavior, whether positive or negative, and parent contact. Behavior logs can be physical or digital.

Physical Behavior Log- Print out a [log sheet](#) for each student and file in a binder alphabetically. Add additional sheets for students as needed.

Digital Behavior Log- Create folders for each block/class. Make a copy of a [log sheet](#) for each student (save as student name).

Tip for keeping logs up-to-date: It is best to fill-in log during or after parent contact; however, that may not always be feasible. Instead, set a time each week to catch up on notes and update logs.

Sign In/Out Log

Knowing where students are at all times is extremely important because parents trust schools to keep their child(ren) safe while in their care. Utilizing a [log](#) for students to sign in and out of class helps keep track of where students are in case of an emergency and also allows teachers to see trends of particular students who may habitually leave the room.

Policies & Procedures

Policies and Procedures refers to all the *little*, yet important things for running a successful classroom. There are several things to think about ahead of time to determine what policies & procedures to include in addition to school-wide routines. Some things to consider are:

- How will students enter the room and what will they do once seated?
- How will students throw away trash during class?
- How will students be recognized to share out to the class?
- What are the expectations during individual/partner/group work?
- How will students rotate learning stations?
- What is the policy for late work?
- Will there be opportunities for extra credit?
- What will the daily agenda include to create a routine for students?
- How often will homework be assigned? What will it look like? Will students complete nightly or turn it in at the end of the week?
- How will students move throughout the room during class? During direct instruction?
- Where will student materials be stored?
- Will students have a certain number of bathroom passes or can they go whenever needed?

While this list is not all inclusive, it is important to consider the Whats, Whys, and Hows of classroom management. *What* are students expected to do? *Why* are they doing it in this way? *How* are they expected to do the task at hand? [Here](#) is a sample handout of classroom policies & procedures that can be sent home at the beginning of the year and explicitly taught to students during the first few weeks of school.

Academic & Behavior Contracts (Action Plans)

There may be a point in the year where students are not progressing academically and/or not displaying desired behaviors for whatever reason. Students may need to enter a contract, academic, behavior, or both, with the teacher and parent to set explicit guidelines around next steps to get them back on track. This contract can also be referred to as an action plan. An action plan outlines steps to take to make progress and/or achieve specific goals. The [Academic contract](#) and [Behavior contract](#) templates can be modified as needed.

Some teachers choose to begin the year with a type of student contact known as a *compact*. This is a basic agreement between teacher and student to acknowledge that students have read and understood the

classroom expectations. This is a generic agreement given to all students. A contract differs in that it is individual for each student based on his/her needs.

Student contracts can range in complexity based on student age and needs (use teacher discretion).

Grouping Students

Grouping students effectively is crucial to successfully managing classroom behaviors and collaboration between students. There are multiple factors to consider when grouping students such as *ability, gender, behavior, and learning style.*

Ability: It is recommended to pair students together that can help each other and not cause frustration.

- H-High Ability (above grade level)
- M-Average Ability (on grade level)
- L-Struggling Student (below grade level)

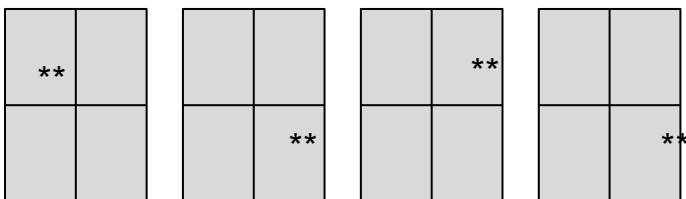
Grouping Recommendations:

Partners	Trio	Group of 4
H & H H & M M & M M & L	H & M & M M & M & L	H & M & M & L M & M & L & L H & H & M & M

Gender: Be mindful of the combination of male & female. Try to avoid all female and/or all male groups.

Behavior: Begin a seating chart by separating students who cause class disruptions--divide & conquer. If this method is not feasible, it may sometimes benefit the class to group all misbehaviors together to target focus on maintaining the rest of the class.

- Method 1



- Method 2

			**	*
				*
			*	*
			*	

Learning Style: It is recommended to conduct a [learning styles inventory](#) at the beginning of the year to determine what ways students learn best. Based on results, students can be grouped by similarities. Also, students could be given **assignment modifications** based on learning style & preference.

Additional Resources

- <https://www.teachhub.com/10-classroom-management-tips-follow>
- <https://www.edutopia.org/blog/classroom-management-tips-novice-teachers-rebecca-alber>
- <https://www.pbisrewards.com/blog/classroom-management-tips-great-school-year/>
- <https://www.naesp.org/communicator-february-2014/ten-tips-effective-classroom-management>

Parent Communication

Plan for Parents

While thinking of “how to” and “what to” cover throughout the year for students, it is equally as important to plan “how to” and “what to” communicate to parents. Teachers should create a plan for parents to be a partner in education in order to increase student engagement and academic success. Getting parents involved early in the year is imperative to students’ education and sets the tone for parent/teacher communication.

Some things to consider when developing a plan for parents include:

- Will newsletters be sent home? If so, how often? (Digital vs. Print)
- What topics will be covered throughout the year?
- What strategies do parents need, per content area, in order to help their child at home?
- How can parents help their child study at home?
- What major events/calendar dates should parents be aware of?
- Where can parents go for help if their child is failing?
- What additional school resources are available to support parents & students (mental health counselor, social worker--CFST, etc.)?
- How can a parent be involved in the school? (PTO, Parent Representative, Chaperone, etc.)

Providing parents with a FAQ sheet or overview of the year can be very helpful and may alleviate some of their concerns and answer questions, especially when students transition from elementary to middle school and middle to high school.

Parent Contact Log

Parent contact is crucial to bridging the gap between home and school. It is important to document every contact made with parents, whether positive or negative. Documentation allows teachers to keep track of individual needs of students based on parent input as well as show efforts made to help all students succeed. Teachers may set up contact logs in whichever way works best for him/her; however, the log should include spaces for Date, Parent Name, Updated Number, and Brief Notes from the conversation, at the very least.

[Sample Parent Contact Log#1](#)

[Sample Parent Contact Log #2](#)

Resources

- <https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/articles/teaching-content/year-long-plan-maintaining-good-parent-teacher-communication/>
- <https://www.teachhub.com/parent-teacher-communication-tips>
- <https://www.canva.com/learn/10-steps-to-constructive-teacher-parent-communication/>
- <https://www.kickboardforschools.com/blog/post/family-engagement-communication/creative-ways-for-teachers-to-communicate-with-parents/>

Planning & Instruction

Planning System

Throughout a school year, many events, schedule changes, and unpredictable things will occur. It is important to begin the year with a system or method in place for navigating around these extenuating factors.

Each teacher gets a planning period during students' encore or elective time; however, as a beginning teacher, that is usually not enough time. It is recommended to break down the phases of planning throughout the week so as to not become overwhelmed. There are a variety of teacher tasks that will need to be completed on a daily basis but the most important thing that affects students is proper planning. Below is an example of non-negotiable tasks to complete regardless of what a day may bring:

Monday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Determine standards & learning goals for upcoming week ● Begin locating resources & activities (brainstorm)
Tuesday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Begin completing lesson plan template (fill in the knowns) ● Continue locating resources and begin logging these in the template as well
Wednesday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Complete lesson plan template
Thursday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Print resources needed; organize by day ● Set up digital resources in Canvas as needed ● Jot additional notes on lesson plan template that may be needed
Friday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ensure all materials are ready to go for following week ● Create station directions (if applicable) ● Tidy up room, label board with new information

Unit Planning

It is recommended to create units around content standards to create a flow of learning for students. With unit plans, students are able to determine themes and how information is interconnected. As a beginning teacher, it is important to collaborate with resident teachers to determine what units are best to plan for students-what works and doesn't work. Many pacing guides in the district outline units, themes or strands in which to teach students; however, some content areas have free range on *what* to use to teach the goal standards.

Consider the standards that need to be taught for each grading period, how long it will take and what common themes that can be used to teach the standards. With this information, one can create a [Year-at-a-Glance overview](#) of pacing and units to cover. This is helpful when schedule changes and unpredictable events take place. With a unit overview in place, one can determine what changes can be made and extension activities can be taken away if needed or where additional time can be given when students are struggling with a concept. With this type of overview planning, it is important to add in dates from the district and school calendar, such as holidays, teacher workdays, assemblies, etc. that will affect instructional time.

Anticipatory Planning

Anticipatory planning refers to anticipating difficulties that students may have with specific standards. If a standard proves to be difficult for students to grasp, it is recommended to have additional, back-up activities on hand to supplement learning in case the lesson doesn't go as planned.

Daily Agenda Outline

Creating routines and procedures during the first several days of school are important. Having a daily agenda posted for students allows them to know what the day will entail and also helps keep the teacher on track. Below is a template for a daily agenda that can be used for any content area:

- I. Activator: How will students engage in the daily lesson?
- II. Review: Homework, Previous day's lesson, Learning Goals
- III. Guided Instruction: What will the teacher do? Mini lesson? New material?
- IV. Independent Practice: What will the students do? Rotation Stations? Group/Partner Work?
- V. Summarizer: How will students show they've accomplished the learning goal?

***Daily agendas can be more complex than the above example but should incorporate all components at the very least.*

Student Choice

Student engagement is directly related to student achievement and success. Student choice is one of the top ways to engage students. The success of a lesson partially depends on planning ahead and determining where student choice can be incorporated. One has to determine what he/she feels comfortable allowing students to choose whether it be one assignment over another or what product to submit for a project. Some ways to incorporate student choice in the classroom include, but is not limited to:

- Partner to work with
- Activity #1 vs. Activity #2 (both cover the same standard & concept)
- End Product (Multimedia Presentation vs. Report vs. Infographic)
- Writing Prompt
- Paper/Pencil vs. Digital Classroom
- Partner work vs. Independent
- Self-selected reading
- Graphic Organizer
- Strategy/Method (RUNNERS, CUBES, Scientific Method)

Article: Incorporating Student Choice in the Classrooms (*Lists great questions to think about when planning for student choice.*)

[Choice boards](#) are also a great way to incorporate student choice in the classroom. Choice boards are designed to incorporate many levels of thinking and demonstration of mastery. Some activities can be easy-to-do tasks, while others may be more rigorous for students to complete. Teachers can strategically place activities so that each direction includes a range of difficulty for students.

[Choice Board Examples](#)

Filing System

Beginning teachers spend a lot of time their first few years in the classroom searching for material to use. It is wise to create files to house all of these materials as a go-to repository. Activities and assignments can be tweaked based on students' needs each year but will not have to be created from scratch. Some ways to file materials are by:

- Unit Plans
- Standard
- Strand
- Concept

- Content area (if teaching multiple)

If filing print materials, manila folders can be created based on which method decided. If filing digitally, google drive allows one to create folders that documents can be moved to in order to stay organized.

Grading

When planning activities and assignments for students throughout the year, it is important to determine which activities and assignments will be graded. Some questions to consider when it comes to grading are:

- Will activities be graded for completion or accuracy?
- Will homework be assigned and graded?
- How many quizzes vs. tests for each grading period?
- What will the total number of grades collected for the grading period be?
- What combination of grades (classwork, quizzes/tests, homework) be included?
- Will students be given opportunities for extra credit?
- How and when will students retake tests on which they score below proficiency? ([Board Policy 3400](#))

Data Analysis

Teachers have access to a wide variety of data on students--demographic, testing, academic history, social history, cumulative grades, behavior, etc. Knowing what to do with this data and how to interpret it to increase student success and achievement is key. For the purpose of this toolkit the focus will be on looking at student progress data. There are 3 main questions to ask when looking at data:

1. What does the data tell me?
 - a. trends within class vs. trends with individual students
 - b. standards proficient vs. standards not proficient
 - c. # of students proficient vs. not proficient
 - d. questions that students struggled with
2. What does the data *not* tell me?
 - a. Test anxiety
 - b. social/emotional factors
 - c. instructional time loss/class disruptions
3. What are the next steps?
 - a. What are some actions to take to improve the data?
 - b. When will students be reassessed on standards?

Additional Resources

- <https://www.edutopia.org/article/new-teachers-lesson-curriculum-planning-resources>
- https://blogs.edweek.org/teachers/new_teacher_chat/2018/03/tips_for_lesson_planning_for_new_teachers.html
- https://www.educationworld.com/a_curr/curr264.shtml

Accessories

Substitute Binder

As a beginning teacher, one does not plan to be absent but emergencies occur and life happens. It is imperative to establish a plan for a substitute teacher *before* the first day of school. A substitute binder will be helpful in guiding a substitute in the right direction when it comes to holding students to the same expectations and school rules that have already been established. There are several things that should be included in the binder such as, but not limited to:

- Daily Schedule
- Lesson for the Day
- Attendance Roster
- Seating Chart
- Emergency Drills
- Emergency Plans (for unplanned absences--should consist of foundational skill review for students)
- Classroom Procedures/Routines
- How to Access Technology if Needed (Smartboard, Passwords, Student login information, etc.).

Substitute binders may be designed in any way; however, it is recommended to keep it as simple as possible so that the directions are easy to follow. It is recommended to keep the substitute binder on the teacher's desk and/or inform a teammate of its location so it is easy to retrieve.

PDP Guide: How To

Teachers have to complete a Professional Development Plan annually. This plan reflects on what he/she needs to become more proficient in certain areas. Sometimes, principals, mentors, or the Beginning Teacher Coordinator may suggest what goals need to be included in a PDP. However, the PDP should reflect an *individual's* quest for increasing his/her knowledge and practice as a teacher.

PDP goals should be linked to the [NC Teacher Evaluation Standards](#). The PDP will be completed in the online evaluation site known as NCEES. This website is included in the apps on the homepage of class link. [Here](#) is a How-To guide for completing a PDP (see pgs. 1-4).

Social/Emotional Learning

Teachers wear many hats and play many roles in addition to engaging students' minds inside the classroom. It is important to teach the *whole child*, which includes tapping into their social and emotional needs. Social-Emotional learning refers to the "process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions (Griffith, D., & Slade, S. (2018, October). A Whole Child Umbrella. *Educational Leadership: The Promise of Social-Emotional Learning*, 76(2).)." Having background information about a student, what triggers him/her, what ways he/she learns best and peer relationships are all crucial to being able to reach and teach a student academically. If basic social and emotional needs aren't met first, it will be very difficult to engage a student in the classroom. Listed below are several examples of how to meet students' social and emotional needs in the classroom:

- Include lessons on character building, dealing with peer pressure, recognizing emotions in self and others, how to work with others, etc.
- Incorporate mindfulness & yoga activities

- Teach resilience & grit
- Equip students with tools to handle their emotions
- Connecting content to real-world situations
- Promote positivity
- Allow time for student reflection & journaling
- Creating routines & schedules for students

Additional Resources for Social/Emotional Learning

- [https://www.edweek.org/media/150305presentation\(4pm\).pdf](https://www.edweek.org/media/150305presentation(4pm).pdf)
- <https://www.pbisrewards.com/blog/sel-in-the-classroom/>
- <https://www.weareteachers.com/21-simple-ways-to-integrate-social-emotional-learning-throughout-the-day/>

Instructional Technology

There are a myriad of digital tools, apps, programs, and websites that can be used in the classroom to engage students but what matters most is *how* they are used. Instructional technology should not be used as a substitute for worksheets or traditional paper/pencil, rather the use of technology should either augment or redefine a student's learning and demonstration of mastery.

- [Scotland County School Digital Resources for Instruction](#)
- [Digital Integration Handbook](#)

Self-Care

It is imperative that teachers incorporate self-care into their daily, weekly, and monthly routines. Without self-care, "teacher burnout" comes frequently and can be intense. Below are some tips for teacher self-care:

- Schedule a date with a friend
- Have an at-home spa day or night
- Read a book of interest
- Limit social media
- Reflect on something that happened each day that was positive
- Mediate
- Listen to calming music
- Practice deep breathing
- Take a walk
- Try a new hobby or craft
- Create a playlist of songs to uplift
- Set work boundaries (Ex. "I will leave at 4 pm no matter what.")
- Journal

There are many, many other ideas to help teachers take care of themselves--it is important to pick something and ENJOY it!