

Helpful Hints

For the First Day

- Write students' names in textbooks BEFORE the first day. Then you don't have to spend class time doing it. You could also have students write their own names and then go around and write down book numbers and student names. I like to have this done before so I don't have to worry about student behavior on the first day.
- During the first week of school you will have a LOT of paperwork (assigning lockers, etc.). Have quiet activities for students to do.
- Have a seating chart on the overhead. Having assigned seating and organizing alphabetically (at least at first) will help you to learn names and quickly take roll.
- Take roll out loud on the first day to make sure you are pronouncing names correctly. After the first day, take roll using your seating chart.
- Have students fill out information sheets with their classes and parent contact information. BE SURE TO GET PARENT EMAILS. This is an easy way to contact parents for minor problems and it can save you lots of time.
- Provide Supply List. Give students ONE weekend to collect supplies. Then check supplies for a grade (especially calculators!!).
- Have a Course Information packet that includes classroom procedures:
 - Do not talk while the teacher or another student is talking.
 - Sharpen pencils BEFORE the tardy bell.
 - Have your notebook and pen out on your desk when the bell rings.
 - Begin the warm-up as soon as the bell rings.
 - Throw trash away as you leave, not during class.
 - Restroom breaks are allowed only for emergencies.
 - Do not pack up your bag until 30 seconds before the bell (This works VERY well and has saved me lots of aggravation this semester!).
 - Students have two days to turn in make-up work for every day that they were absent. (Different schools will have different policies.)
 - If a student is absent the day before the test, the student should come to school the next day prepared to take the test.
- Know your school's policies: tardy policy, cell phone policy, absences, hall pass, bathroom policy.

Classroom Procedures

- Make a list of your classroom procedures BEFORE the first day of class.
- Don't be afraid to change a procedure mid-Semester if it is not working.
- Have a posted list of "missed assignments" for students that are absent. My list includes graded assignments and handouts (that can be obtained from a file cabinet of extra worksheets).
- List today's topics to be covered and their homework assignment on the board. Students like to know what is planned for the day.
- Have a "make-up/late work" tray for each block. Students can turn in their work without disturbing you.
- Warm-up:
 - I have a warm-up every day. Many times, I put problems on the board if students were having trouble the day before (or could use a refresher for today's class). Often, though, the warm-up is mainly organizational (i.e. Check your folder (for graded assignments). Pick up Handouts. Turn in your lab notebook. Take out the worksheet we were working on yesterday. Put your homework on your desk. Students quickly learn to check the board when they walk in.
 - Keep a set of index cards with student names to call on students randomly. Students receive a check if they attempt warm-up questions (when called on randomly) and a zero if they obviously did not attempt the warm-up. This will become a participation grade.
 - While students are doing their warm-up, I take roll and get myself organized.

EOC Classes

- Provide students with a list of goals and topics to be covered.

- Give out reference tables (the same ones that they will have for the EOC) and allow them to use these for their tests.
- FREQUENTLY refer to the list of goals to make sure that you are covering all the topics on the EOC. Your textbook will not cover all the topics that will be on the EOC.
- Space out the book chapters on a calendar so that you know where you SHOULD be in order to finish the course material on time. You will need to make adjustments, but this helps to stay focused. Some textbooks have a suggested number of days for each chapter – use this as a guide.

Parent Contact

- Get parents' emails as well as phone numbers. Again, this can save you lots of time.
- Contact parent EARLY – when you first start to see a problem.
- Check grades periodically and contact parents of students that are failing or have missed multiple homework assignments.
- Be positive when you are talking to a parent. E.g. "I can tell that Brandon has a lot of potential and could do very well in this class, but...."
- Keep a record of ALL parent contacts.

Organization

- Have folders for everything!
 - **For you:** locker combinations, extra handouts, student information sheets (with the student's schedule of classes and contact information), ISS/OSS forms, textbook list, extra tests
 - **For students:** extra handout folder(s), a folder for each student for returning papers. (It saves class time if you have students check their folders as they come into the classroom rather than passing out tests one by one. I always write "Clean out your folder." as part of their warm-up instructions.)
- While students are taking tests, write the names of absent students on blank tests.
- Gradebook:
 - Absences: U for unexcused, E for excused, A for school activity.
 - Grades: If student is absent, leave blank. If student did not have homework, put zero and change to late grade if student turns in assignment late.
 - You might need to turn in your gradebook at the end of the year, so make sure that you keep this up!
- Hole-punch handouts if you have time. This helps students keep their notebook organized.
- Have students pick up and staple worksheets for their warm-up.

Dealing with Student Problems and the Administration

- Explain to your students WHY you are having them do something in a particular way. For example, "I am having you take time in class to correct your tests (even though no extra points will be given) so that you will have the correct answers when you review for your EOC."
- Always have TOO much planned just in case a class gets extended or your activities didn't take as long as you planned for. As students finish a worksheet, have them read a section of their textbook. If students are kept busy, they don't have time to cause problems.
- Write your **own** worksheets if students do not understand concepts in class. Often the worksheets that come with the textbook try to test students on multiple concepts at once. It helps to **simplify!** If students are frustrated, they can become behavior problems.
- **Don't be afraid to change your lesson plan between blocks!** If an activity didn't work during 1st block, change it for your next block!!
- If you are having a lot of trouble with a specific class, you can ask your mentor or an assistant principal to sit in on the class and give you advice.
- Get to know your assistant principals, the secretaries, and the maintenance staff.
- Keep your principal informed about problems, especially if you think the principal might receive a telephone call from a parent.
** Don't bother the principal too much. Principals are very busy and if you tell them every problem you are having, they will begin to think that your classroom management is not effective.**