

FIRST YEAR TEACHERS: PREP/KINDERGARTEN

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Before the school year begins:

- make contact with the school; arrange to visit
- ask for copies of the school policy and curriculum documents
- check the arrangements for Preps/Kinder children starting school
 - do they all begin on the same day?
 - are they timetabled to begin on different days at different times?
 - what is the dismissal time for new enrolment children?
 - do all children stay at school for lunch?
 - are Preps/Kindergarten children allowed out at recess time with all other students, or do they take recess at a different time?
 - what is the school lunch policy? Do children eat in their classrooms?
- will you be part of a teaching team who plan together; will you have a mentor?
- what are the arrangements for ordering classroom supplies (paints, coloured paper etc)?
- enquire if there is a school camera
- arrange to get into your classroom a day or two before the children's school year begins to set up the room
- start saving empty cardboard boxes and other interesting scrap materials, for construction activities; also, collect clean dress ups

Setting up your classroom

- ensure your classroom is an interesting place to enter
- write a large welcome sign and display on an easel inside the classroom door
- display a list of the children's names on the outside of your classroom, so parents can see they have found their child's room, and as well, they can see which other children are in the same classroom
- display your name also
- make a pin-on name tag for each child (first and surname); set the name tags out on a table inside your classroom
- have children's names on labels, ready to be pasted on their lockers. Use different coloured paper for the different name labels; some may be rectangular, some square etc.
- ensure the class meeting place is big enough for all children to sit together comfortably. Perhaps you can find several comfortable old lounge chairs or a couch to mark a boundary for the meeting space.
- create some distinct areas: building and construction, home area, sand area, writing area, puzzle area
- set up a book area and display interesting picture story and non-fiction books, face out.
- make some signs which limit the number of children to work in each area, at any one time
 - eg. 5 children in the home corner

- if possible, have shared classroom materials eg pencils, textas. Requiring young children to have their own grey lead and coloured pencils invites trouble, for it is difficult for 4-5 yr olds to identify one pencil from another.
- ensure you have a good supply of large plain paper charts for your class writing demonstrations
- write each child's first name on a flash card, and keep in magazine box, labelled 'Children's names'.
- Select one or two BIG BOOKS to use throughout the first week.

The First Day

- arrive in plenty of time to have activity areas ready for the children
- as each child arrives introduce yourself to the child and parent. Ask each parent to help the child find his name tag and to pin it to his clothes. Then parent and child together choose the child's locker label, and paste it on the locker, where the child stores his belongings.
- show the parent and child around the classroom and encourage the child to settle to an activity
- parents: for many parents it is quite traumatic to see their child start school. Be warm and understanding. If parents wish to stay for a little while, to ensure their child has settled, encourage this. If a child is very distraught and crying loudly, sometimes it is wise to have the parent take the child outside to the play area, and settle him there, away from the bustle of the classroom. Then return later. To keep the very distraught child in the classroom with all the other new enrolments, can make other children anxious.
- before the parent leaves, note on the whiteboard if the child is to go to after-school-care, or note the name of person to collect the child.
- introduce a stop signal and have children practise stopping what they are doing and facing the teacher, when they hear the signal, which may be a particular clapped pattern, or the ringing of a small bell. It is important that children learn quickly what is expected when they hear the stop signal.
- plan a walk around the school before morning recess, to orientate the children to the school surroundings, toilets, infant playground, office, library, art room
- mark the roll after each break, to ensure all children have returned to the classroom. If any are missing, advise your co-ordinator or team leader, so someone will be sent to find the missing child.
- At the end of each day
 - always plan to end the day happily. Talk about what the children have done during the day. Ask what was best for them; what have they learned. Read a carefully chosen story.
 - allow a good ten minutes for the children to collect their lunch boxes, coats etc and return to the classroom to wait for parents. Some young children have never had to do this before, so it takes time to find their locker, collect their belongings and return their name tags to the table.
- Take photos of the children throughout the day. Use the photos later in the week to make a class experience book.
- Collect pieces of work done by the children (paintings, writing). Encourage the children to take these artefacts home at the end of the day. If they are not taken home, keep them to include in each child's personal evaluation file.

The First Week

Aim

- for each child to have a happy introduction to school and to be enthusiastic about attending
- for the children in the room to begin to form friendships
- for the children's parents to be comfortable with their children's initial experience of school
- to establish routines: stop signal, how to sit and gather in the community area, packing up procedures, lunchtime routines,
- to understand and observe end of recess and lunchtime procedures
- for children to become familiar with the classroom, the school yard, location of toilets, art room, library etc
- to take photos of all children engaging in school activities
- to collect a sample of writing from each child; date and include this in the child's personal evaluation file
- to have children commence borrowing a take home book
- to record a few evaluative notes about each child:
 - a) how the child settles into school, child's interests, child's confidence, child's friends
 - b) mathematical concepts: interact with children as they build and construct. Do they understand 'big', 'little', 'more', 'less', 'long', 'short', 'same', 'different'. Do they know names of numbers 1-10? What one-to-one correspondence do they have?
 - c) Literacy concepts: 'print', 'picture', 'direction of print', 'word', 'letter', 'title'. Can they read? Can they write their names?
- to make contact with any specialist teachers in the school eg phys-ed, art, music. Find out the particular focus for each of these teachers, in their curriculum area, during the first term. Plan to build upon what these specialists are teaching, in your classroom. If the focus for the art teacher is printing, you might set up an experimental printing table in your room. If the focus for phys-ed is gymnastics, build upon what the phys-ed teacher is doing in the phys-ed lessons you take with your children.

FIRST DAY: one possible timetable PREP/KINDERGARTEN

9.00	<p>As chn arrive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • chn find and pin on name tags • chn and parent paste name label on locker <p>DEVELOPMENTAL ACTIVITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • show children choice of activities • each child settles to activity of his choosing <p>book corner writing area painting easels building area dress-up and home corner jigsaws sand tray</p>	<p>Open the classroom door when you are organised, about 8.45am, and allow chn to enter the room. This means you can greet and help settle each child. It is much more difficult if all children (and parents) enter at once. If chn are arriving at staggered times, developmental activities will continue past 10.00</p>
10.00	<p>Have children line up in 2's, for walk around school. First go to the toilets. Show children the office, the library, art room, playground etc. You might find the classrooms of older brothers and sisters. At various points count the children, ensuring you have lost none. Encourage children to help you count.</p>	<p>Observe: do all children understand the 'twoness' of 2'? Who joins in counting ?</p>
10.30	<p>Finger /Action Rymes Rhymes</p> <p>Teach children a finger rhyme. eg Ipsey Wipsey Spider, Where is Thumbkin, My Hands are Clapping, If you're Happy and You Know It, One Two Three Four Five. Discover which finger rhymes the children already know.</p>	<p>Finger rhymes, action songs are valuable language activities. At pack up time, if you start an action song with those children who are waiting on the mat, suddenly all the others hurry up to join in.</p>
10.45	<p>PLAY LUNCH (Check school play lunch policy) Young children eat slowly, so allow time for them to finish their play lunch. Check that children eat only their play lunch, and not their lunch. If the children are to eat inside, organise this in the community meeting area. (If they eat at the tables, you may have spilt drinks and crumbs all over the tables where later children are to work). Children must put any rubbish in a bin.</p>	
11.00	<p>RECESS Check school policy for Preps and Kindergarten children. This either occurs at regular RECESS time, or at a time when no other children are in the yard.</p>	

<p>11.30</p>	<p>LITERACY</p> <p>a) Repeated Readings with a BIG BOOK Some appropriate titles for early in the Prep year could include: Story Box titles such as <i>Mrs Wishy-Washy</i> or well known folk tales such as <i>The Three Billy Goats Gruff</i>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read the title. Have children predict what the book might be about • Teacher reads book aloud • Invite discussion • Tchr reads aloud pausing every so often, for the children to insert the next word. (oral close) • Chn and tchr read the book aloud together • Individual children volunteer to ‘read’ the book as others observe. <p>b) Writing Explain how this year you and the children will write and publish books together. The first book is to be called ‘Starting School’</p> <p>Together begin a draft of this book. As you write explicitly mention print concepts such as ‘direction of print’, ‘word’, ‘sentence’, ‘letter’. Encourage children to contribute sentences.</p> <p>c) Children write Explain that it is now time for the children to write. Some children may try to say they cannot write. Try to encourage them to write as best they can. Tell them you understand that little children write in different ways. You might have Writing Books (plain scrap books) ready to use. If not each child writes on a plain piece of newsprint. Before the children go to their tables, have them sit quietly to think ‘What they will write about’. Ask one or two individuals what they will be writing about. This is an important message: writing is always about something. Have children sit in whole class circle to share their writing. Encourage individuals to read their writing</p>	<p>On following days, revisit this book. Are there small copies, which the children might borrow as take home books? Check chn’s knowledge of print concepts: have individuals find a ‘word’, a letter’, point to ‘the print’, ‘the picture’, show the directionality of ‘the print’.</p> <p>You will not finish this draft in one session, return to it each day. Re-read and add more text. Teach print concepts- print direction, ‘word’, letter’, ‘full-stop’. Can children find particular words eg ‘school’?</p> <p>Move around and try to date each piece. If children volunteer some information about their writing, record these comments at the bottom of the page.</p> <p>It is important children learn, they will be writing in different ways, but that you the teacher value the writing of each one of them.</p>
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12.45	Toilet visit, wash hands.	
1.00	LUNCH. In some schools, for the first few weeks, Preps/Kinder children leave at 2.00pm.	Allow time for this. Remember young children eat slowly
2.00	Getting to Know You (Collect some small mirrors for this activity) Explain to the children how important it is for the children and teacher to get to know one another. Thus, each person is to draw a portrait of him/ herself. The portraits will be of neck and heads. You demonstrate how to look carefully in a mirror and then do hour head portrait as big as the paper will allow. Then focus on hair colour, eye colour, glasses(?) etc. Chn look in mirrors and draw their portraits. Later portraits are displayed with children's names around classroom walls. When taken down they can be published in a large class book, for the children to peruse at their leisure.	Initial integrated studies will focus on 'Getting to Know You'. On later days, children can count the portraits, count the girls, boys; look for similarities and differences eg 'Maria, Lucy and Simon all have black hair'
3.10	Storytime Collect belongings from pegs. Handout the day's writing or work to be taken home. Ensure after- school-care children are collected for after-school program, and other children have someone to collect them.	