

# A Word From a First-Class Teacher

*A powerful essay, excerpted below, helped Jenise Jackson win the First-Year Teacher of the Year award in a contest sponsored by the Education Foundation of Yavapai County and the Rotary Clubs of Yavapai County, Arizona.*

I was 15 when a teacher changed my life. She saw something in me that I did not see myself and nurtured a spark that gave me purpose. It's been 25 years since that teacher inspired a shy teenager to pursue the dream of writing and teaching. The road has not always been smooth or easy, but without her initial push, becoming a teacher might truly have been the road not taken.

Today, it is my turn to nurture and challenge. As I work with my students each day, I remind myself to stretch beyond the daily teaching routines and recognize and act on the moment of magic: to help a student see and believe that anything is possible. It is such a moment that makes each day of teaching something to look forward to. My best day in this first year of teaching is not a single day but a collection of such moments.

Five years from now, I still see myself in a classroom with students. Hopefully, I'll have a few new teaching tricks up my sleeve as a result of more experience, but I'll still be sharing laughter, teaching curriculum, instilling responsibility, and creating excitement about learning.

Teachers, now more than ever, are role models for the next generation. I plan on being one of those role models.

—Jenise Jackson, Fourth-Grade Teacher

## MAKE YOUR FIRST DAY A GREAT DAY

You have already assembled your materials, arranged the desks and equipment, and put up bulletin boards. Now you must prepare your first day's lesson plans and gather the materials necessary to teach the lessons. Remember three rules of thumb on that first day:

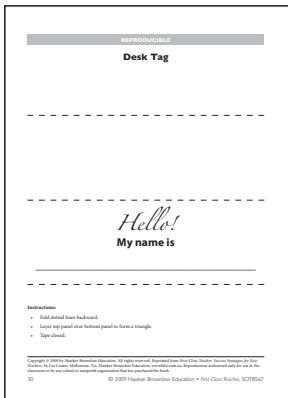
1. Make it fun.
2. Plan down to the minute.
3. Then overplan.

Prepare for more activities than you will probably accomplish on the first day. There's nothing worse than having a lesson that takes much less time than you anticipated, and then not knowing how to fill the remaining minutes. Make sure you include time to teach students about the procedures you expect them to follow. For instruction on how to teach procedures, see page 45. Meanwhile, use the "Suggested First-Day Activities" reproducible on page 29 to plan your agenda.

### Make Final Preparations

Conduct a final check of your classroom and of your plans for the day. Take care of those last-minute specifics that will help the school year start smoothly. Remember, you want to project an attitude to students that says, "You can depend on me." Because of all the planning and organization you have done, you can face the day with confidence and a sense of control.

- Review your lesson plans for the day.
- Review your behavior management plan. (See chapter 2, "How to Manage Behavior.")
- Review your schedule for the day. Check that the class schedule is posted. Make sure you know what duties you have and where to go for them.
- Run off copies of all reproducible materials you will need. Organize them so they are ready to distribute.
- Prepare all name tags or desk tags. (You may choose to ask students to make their own desk tags from the "Desk Tag" reproducible provided in the resource section on page 30.)
- Prepare student supplies for distribution.
- Conduct a final check of your room arrangement.
- Post your name and room number outside your classroom, and write it on the board.





## How to Manage Behavior

*“I was worried about spending so much time on classroom rules and procedures. I thought, ‘I need to get started on teaching.’ But my principal said, ‘Don’t worry. You have to do this before you can teach.’”*

On the first day of school, you may find that students seem eager to please you. But sooner or later—and usually sooner—you’ll notice that some students don’t respond to your requests. A few students create disruptions, and suddenly, their attitude seems contagious. You may find yourself asking, “How could I have prevented this? What can I do to regain control of my classroom?”

Don’t judge your potential as a teacher based on the behavior of your students, especially during the early weeks of school, but do make sure you promptly put your classroom management plan in place. Spend some time before the school year begins thinking through your expectations and designing a plan to help students meet them.

As a new teacher, you will probably want to begin with an approach that creates order and gives students confidence in your leadership. Many beginning teachers use the Assertive Discipline® approach because it provides that structure and helps you develop and implement a discipline plan. You will learn some basic Assertive Discipline strategies in this chapter.

Over the course of your career, you will likely want to enhance your approach by adding strategies and exploring other discipline models. You may eventually adopt an eclectic style that reflects your own philosophy and addresses your students’ needs. Use the concepts on these pages as the seeds of your ongoing evolution.

# Problem-Solving Phone Call Planner

Date of Call: \_\_\_\_\_

Student's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade/Class: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent or Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

**Jot down points you want to cover in each of these areas during the call.**

Statement of concern: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Describe the specific problem or behavior: \_\_\_\_\_

Describe steps you've taken so far: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Get parent input on the problem: \_\_\_\_\_

Record parent's comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Present ideas for solutions:

What you'll do at school: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What you'd like the parent to do at home: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Reassure the parent the problem can be solved: \_\_\_\_\_

Describe the follow-up contact the parent can expect: \_\_\_\_\_

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## **Activity Idea: Good Manners**

1. Distribute a snack to students as they walk into the classroom. Then say, “I counted \_\_\_\_ students who said ‘Thank you.’ I really feel good when you say thank you. It shows me that you appreciated what I did, and it tells me that you know how to be polite.”
2. Ask students to list other expressions that indicate politeness, such as “Please,” “You’re welcome,” “Excuse me,” and “I’m sorry.” List these words and phrases on the board. Vary your inflection as you say the words and point out that how we speak matters as much as what we say. Ask students to practice using a polite tone of voice.
3. Ask students to work in pairs to role-play situations in which they must practice good manners. For instance, one student sees another carrying a heavy stack of books. The student offers to carry half the books. The other student says, “Thank you.”

You may want to use puppets to role-play various situations for younger students. Older students may want to define and locate words related to good manners in the “Good Manners Word Puzzle” on page 201. Or you may challenge them to develop a comic book about manners, with each student contributing one comic strip. Make copies of the “Good Manners Comic Strip” on page 202.

4. Review the lesson several times throughout the year. From time to time, challenge students to keep track of the number of times they say “please” or “thank you” throughout the day.

## **Activity Idea: Catalog Student Compliments**

1. Look for the “Catalog of Compliments” on page 203 and make a copy for each student. Also copy and cut out “You Deserve a Compliment!” cards on page 204.
2. Use the cards to write a compliment to each student in the class. Before school, put one of the cards on each student’s desk. A classroom aide can help read the compliments to younger students.
3. After students come in and read their compliments, ask them the following questions:
  - What is a compliment?
  - How does it feel to receive a compliment?
  - When is a good time to give a compliment?
4. Point out that it feels good to give compliments to others. Encourage students to give compliments when someone does a kind deed, accomplishes a task, or makes a genuine effort to do something positive. Explain that a person who receives a compliment should say thank you.
5. Give each student several copies of the “You Deserve a Compliment!” card and a copy of the “Catalog of Compliments.” Ask them to refer to these compliments to consider the types of compliments they might give. Students write their compliments on a card and drop them into a Compliment Jar.
6. At the end of the day, select “compliment readers” to draw the slips from the jar and read them aloud. Ask students who benefits from compliments. Elicit the response that both the giver and the receiver feel good.