

It's Summertime, the Best Time to Plan

By Belinda Adams

7/2022

So, it's summertime! I didn't teach summer school this year, and to be honest, that felt great! However, just when most people think educators are relaxing, enjoying lunches with friends, drinking wine by the fire pit, and more, many would be surprised to discover that we are actually *already* planning for the fall. Or at least, I am.

Some can call me strange, and that's okay with me. I happen to love my job. I also love the challenges that each child brings to my classroom. I like to think of them as tiny jigsaw puzzles that look so beautiful once they are put together. By put together, I mean, learning, extending themselves, asking questions, and demonstrating their potential for greater learning.

School actually ended about 6 weeks ago, so I'll be truthful in saying that I did need to take a good three weeks and a few deep breaths to decompress from the school year. After all, that last jaunt from spring break to the end of the year can be exhausting.

These past few weeks, I've got my computer opened, the color printer fired up, and the laminator warming up. Now is when I can feel some ideas flowing ... ideas that have been brewing since mid-winter when the very thought of implementing anything new in my classroom seemed arduous.

I'm also fortunate that I've had the opportunity to look over the files of my incoming class. I am sure that meeting them in person and getting to know them on a personal level will reveal many characteristics I cannot 'see' on paper. However, reading what I am reading, I know this incoming class will pose some challenges I haven't faced in a few years, and it's time to start thinking about how to meet their needs, while at the same time, getting some instruction thrown into the day.

I noticed first off that the majority of this class will be a group of 'young' first graders. When I say 'young,' I'm referring to the fact that many of them have late birthdays and will be coming to first grade after just turning six. That fact equates to some expected immaturity, impulsivity, and lack of a few necessary school-readiness skills. The first month of school will be instrumental to introduce them to and develop the skills that will help them be successful in the classroom.

What have I been doing in anticipation of this knowledge?

First and probably the most critical is to prepare the Morning Social Story. It's a short story I read every morning about the expectations of the classroom. There's a part that I read, and then as the students get to know the story, they repeat the second half of the expectation. It's a great way to start the day. I often tell them, "This is like getting the recipe to the best cookies in the world! All you have to do is follow these expectations, and you are going to have a great day at school today!"

Secondly, I put together a visual schedule for each student's desk. It outlines the schedule of the day (with pictures). This schedule especially highlights when students can expect to take a "brain break," or rest from our class work. It's important for them to recognize right away that learning and work isn't going to last 'all day,' and they will have an opportunity for breaks, recess, lunch, and specials, especially gym class!

Lastly, because I know this is a young group, I've got to plan for a great deal of gross motor movement time. These little bodies aren't going to be ready to stay seated for long periods of time. I've planned some great activities that will allow them to get up out of their seats and exercise those big muscles that require input just as much as their brain.

Summer is a great time to relax, drink up the sunshine, and a few summer libations as well! It's also a great time to take a few moments to reflect on last school year, what worked great (let's repeat that) and what was a dismal failure (let's not repeat that), and plan for something new. Plan a new strategy, like gross motor movement time, that not only energizes your students but energizes you to set all of you up for a great day!

Relax, enjoy and plan!