

FIRST DAY FIRST WEEK: CHECKLIST

MOVING CHILDREN FROM ANXIOUSNESS TO ANTICIPATION FOR THE NEW ACADEMIC YEAR!

“Hi, I’m excited that you are eager to make your school more student-centric and are looking forward to try out the ‘First Day First Week’ process for yourself! I hope you found value in and have enjoyed going through the pack and resources so far.

I invite you to use this quick at a glance checklist as a reference to ensure that you do not miss out on any of the ingredients! It’s really very simple to execute, and here are some things that I keep in mind during the process. **Please feel free to innovate, translate and implement the way you want. And, I would love to know how you have done it. Do Share your experience with us.**”

- *Jahnavi Mehta*

BEFORE

SETTING THE TONE

- Just before the summer break, share with students and parents the school re-opening date and the **importance** of the ‘First Day First Week’ in setting the tone for the year. This communication will help in bringing everyone on the same page and build **anticipation** for the new academic year.
- A **reminder email** regarding the school re-opening and the **relevance** of ‘First Day First Week’ can also be sent to parents a week before school reopens.

PRE-WORK

- Just before the school re-opens, schedule an **orientation program for new parents**. Ensure that during this session, new parents are introduced to the **school culture, protocols** and also informed about the **purpose** of the ‘First Day First Week’ process.
- It’s also a great idea for teachers to do **home visits** before the first day for all new children especially the Pre-K students. When the child sees familiar faces on the first day, it lowers his/her anxiousness.

- ❑ Make sure that the teacher team comes in a week before the students join back to **plan the activities** for the first week. If you have alumni, do invite some of them as well and get their inputs while designing the experiences.
- ❑ It would be a great idea to ensure that experiences are **energizing and intellectually** stimulating. Use this time as an opportunity to set the tone for the year and **co-create the goals** that the school community (students, teachers, and school leaders) would like to work towards through the year.
- ❑ Make spaces more welcoming by **livening up** the school and classrooms with music, fun games like treasure hunt, minute-to-minute games etc.
- ❑ First half an hour of the day can be planned in a way so that students have some time for **catching-up** chit-chat. This time can be utilized by teachers to **meet and greet** students to break the ice.
- ❑ For very young children, teachers could take plan to take turns to **board** the buses from the first stop for each bus route. The presence of the teacher on the bus ride to school will definitely make the students feel **welcome and comfortable**.

DURING

- ❑ During the first week, come together as a school community to **co-create a culture** which will help children in moving from anxiousness to anticipation.
- ❑ Begin each day of the week with a **Conglom** based on a suitable theme.
- ❑ Once you get to class after the Conglom, gather all children close to you. Go back to the **takeaways** of the Conglom and what one might have picked up from it.

STEP 1: Welcome the children enthusiastically as they walk in

- ❑ Right from 'Day One', make **relationship building** with your students a priority. Once each child feels valued and welcome, they will be ready to embark on the learning journey with you as their ally.
- ❑ On the First Day, once the children settle down in the class, start with a **Conglom** for sharing how the children spent their vacations and **applaud their stories**.
- ❑ A great strategy is to start with a **tone-setting game** that will bring the students closer and help them to bond with each other.
- ❑ Next, organize a **school tour** for walking through the spaces of the school with the children to give them a sense of belonging and ownership.
- ❑ On Day 2/3, start with introducing **new teachers and students** during the school/Key Stage assembly. Also, take this opportunity to introduce and thank the **support team** to highlight the important role they play in making the campus safe and welcoming.

STEP 2: Build readiness and anticipation for the learning journey

- ❑ Take the time to co-create the class **routines and protocols** with the students and display them in the classroom. These could be related to sessions, lunch-time, bus journey, transition time, bathroom usage etc.
- ❑ Time should also be given to co-create the **code of conduct** for the school.
- ❑ You can also ask every grade to co-create a '**Goal for the Year**' which could serve as an anchor for them through the year. They can then make it visible in the class through an **installation or art-work**.
- ❑ To make the first week fun and exciting, introduce a cross-class **challenge** that could get children to collaborate and come up with a solution by applying **design thinking**. The challenge could be related to creating an eco-friendly aid, dressing up a school space, working on a dance/music composition etc.

STEP 3: Closing the loop for the day

At the end of each day of the week, have a **dialogue** with students to point out what stood out for them and what their **takeaways** were from the day.

- ❑ Be sure to check with children on the **hot spots** of the day and **co-create solutions** to ensure that they don't carry forward to the next day.
- ❑ Share some **aha moments and shout-outs**.

AFTER

- ❑ **Create & share** memories of the first week in the form of pictures, videos and shout-outs.
- ❑ **Reflect** at the end of week 1 to check for the **readiness of the students** to start their learning journey, and plan accordingly for the next week.
- ❑ It's now time to **unpack** the beacons (academic subjects) and onboard children for a meaningful learning journey.

(Cont.d)



SOME IMPORTANT TIPS

- Help children in identifying the **relevance** and build **anticipation** for the activities, games and challenges that they engage in through the first week.
- Identify a few extra hands to help in **settling** Pre-K children in the first week.
- Take help from **older buddies** to settle younger children in lower grades.
- Take note of the **interests** of children, so that you can **create opportunities** for every child to shine through the year.
- Instead of spending one full week on 'FDFW' consider re-opening school **mid-week** so that Thursday can be utilised as First Day and Friday can be spent on setting the tone for the year. Then in the coming week academic sessions can begin.
- **Meet new students** separately and have a conversation with them to check if they are settling in comfortably. You can also schedule a telephonic conversation with their parents to **re-assure** them of their child's wellbeing and answer any questions that they may have.