



LET THE LEARNING BEGIN!

Summer is over and now it's time for the real fun—and the learning—to begin! These ideas for the beginning of the school year will help you welcome your students back to school in style, teach students ever-important rules and regulations, and have a memorable, meaningful open house. On your mark...get set...and go forward into a successful school year!

Did you Know?

- The first school was established by Egyptians in 3000 B.C.
- Colonists in Massachusetts created public schools that were open to all children in 1647.
- Currently, children in Japan average about 220 school days per year, while students in the United States and France average about 180 school days per year.

Literature Selections

I Don't Want to Go Back to School by Marisabina Russo Greenwillow, 1994 (Picture book, 32 pg.) A student is panicked about returning to school, but learns that it isn't so bad after all.

School Days by B. G. Hennessy Puffin, 1992. (Picture book, 32 pg.) Rhyming text captures interesting events at the beginning of the school year.

Miss Malarkey Doesn't Live in Room 10 by Kevin O'Malley Walker and Co., 1996 (Picture book, 32 pg.) A student discovers that teachers have lives outside of school.

Never Spit on Your Shoes by Denys Cazet Orchard Books, 1993 (Picture book, 32 pg.) Arnie, a puppy, comes home from his first day of school.

Welcome to School!

Put a new spin on show-and-tell with this getting-to-know-you activity. Mail (or hand out at a before-school orientation) a letter to each student that welcomes him to your class, along with a personalized name tag for the student to wear on the first day of school. Greet students by name when they enter the classroom. On the first day of school, give each student a paper lunch bag and tell him to place inside the bag a "mystery" object from home that tells something about him, and bring the bag to school the next day. Then, call on each student to come to the front of the class, introduce himself, and play 10 Questions by inviting the class to ask yes/no questions about the object in the bag. Once the object has been guessed, have the student show the object and explain how it relates to him.

There's No Place Like School!

Make the first day less hectic for you and your students by providing some fun work. Place a blank desk name tag or cubbie marker on each student's desk. When students arrive, play relaxing music and provide crayons and markers for students to personalize their name tags and draw pictures on their cubbie markers of things they want to learn during the upcoming school year. By keeping students busy and happy, you will be available to complete all those first-day teacher tasks!



What's in a Name?

Students can find out if the name fits the classmate! Locate a baby name book with meanings of names. Give each student an index card with her name on it. Read aloud the meaning of each student's name and have her write it under her name on the card. Use art materials to decorate the name cards. On the backs of the cards, allow older students to write whether they think the meanings of their names are accurate for them and why.

Tell-All

Play this game to "break the ice" on the first day of school. Sit in a circle. Pass pencils and a pad of self-stick notes around the circle. Ask each child to take a pencil and one to five self-stick notes. Each child should write one fact about herself on each note pad page. Go around the circle and share all of the facts. Then, write the names on a bulletin board and display the notes beside each name.

Go to the Head of the Class

Get students moving to find things they have in common. Write characteristics on 3" x 5" index cards, such as I have a pet, I went to the beach this summer, I am the youngest in my family, I like reading, Pizza is my favorite food, I play soccer, etc. Place the cards in a bag, pull out one at a time, and read the characteristic to the class. Invite all students who match the characteristic to come to the front of the class and say their names one at a time. After each characteristic has been read, challenge each student to recall the name of a classmate with whom he shares an attribute.

My dog is friendly.

I have blue eyes.

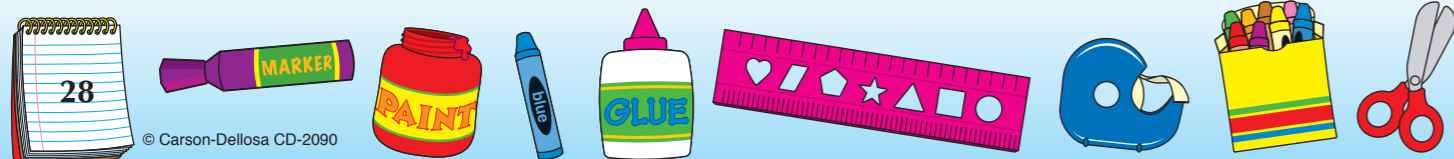
My cat had kittens.

I went to the beach.

I am a twin.

I like reading.

I can skate.



N	A	M	E	O
Jeff	Amy	Tim	J.J.	
Kim	Lisa	Alan	Betsy	
Eddie	Tara	Hank	Kelli	
Leah	Todd	Amber		
Julie	Erik	Penny	David	

Bingo Was His Name-O

Play a fun game of "Name-O" using students' names. List names on the board and distribute copies of the Name-O card pattern (page 40). Tell students to randomly write their classmates' names in the boxes on their Name-O cards. Place student names written on small sheets of paper in a bag. Draw a name from the bag, call it out, and have that student stand up briefly. Use dried beans or other manipulatives to place on a name when it is called out. The first child to cover a row horizontally, diagonally, or vertically is the winner. When someone calls Name-O!, read out the names on the winning row and then identify the matching students.

Whoooo's Missing ??????

After students know each others' names, have them play a missing student name game. Have students place their heads on their desks and close their eyes. Quietly walk around the classroom, tap a student on the shoulder, and have her go outside the classroom. Once she is out of sight, have the remaining students look around and see if they can identify who is missing.

One-on-One Interview Fun!

Encourage creativity with unusual interviews. Brainstorm a list of silly questions, such as, If you could be a food, what would you be? Which animal do you think is the scariest? What is your favorite planet, and why? If you could change your name, what would you change it to? Write the list on the board. Have students interview partners and record each other's answers. Then, sit together in a circle. Ask each pair to introduce each other and tell all of the silly answers they learned.

Student Webs

Help classmates weave webs of information about themselves! Photograph each student in your class. Give children their pictures, along with large sheets of construction paper. Glue each picture in the center of a sheet of paper. Once the glue has dried, have each child draw "webs" from his picture to record personal information, such as name, age, hair and eye color, birthday, etc. Make your own web beforehand for children to use as a reference. Display the webs on a bulletin board titled Read All About Us!



"All About Me" Boxes

Use cereal boxes to turn All About Me information into a three-dimensional display. Provide an empty cereal box for each student. Have students cover the cereal boxes with tempera paint, then draw and label pictures on construction paper shapes to glue to the sides of the boxes. Pictures might be titled Me, My Family, My Favorite Food, My Birthday, My Favorite Book, What I Like Most about School, My Favorite Subject, When I Grow up, I Want to Be..., etc. Display the boxes on a class bookshelf and allow students time to look at the display and learn about their classmates.

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Library

Reading around School

Students will get to know their school and some new words, too! Before school begins, walk around and take pictures of signs, including Exit, Fire Extinguisher, Restroom, etc. Display the pictures on a wall or bulletin board and call on students to read or describe the signs and discuss the meanings of the words and symbols. After all signs have been identified, take a walk around the school and find the signs that match the photographs.

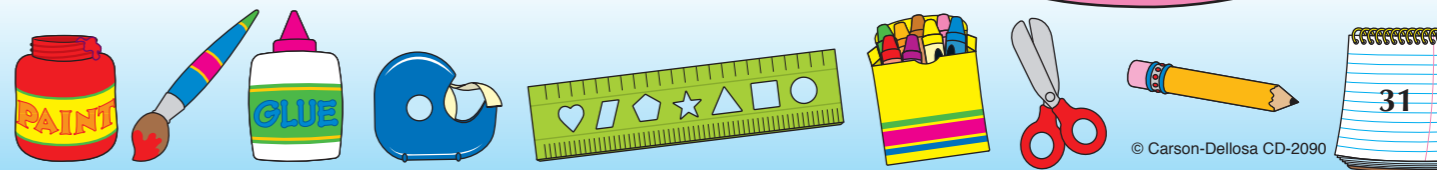
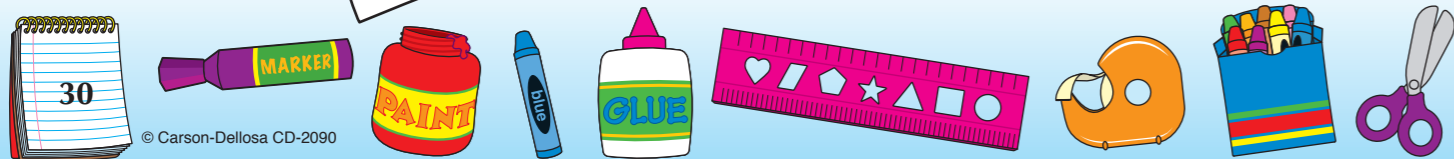


Tasty Teamwork!

Working together means eating together with this delicious, kid-friendly community recipe. Have ingredients and measuring tools available to mix up this snack. If possible, divide the class into groups of four and have each student in a group measure out 1/4 cup of each ingredient so everyone will have the opportunity to mix ingredients for the snack.

Ingredients

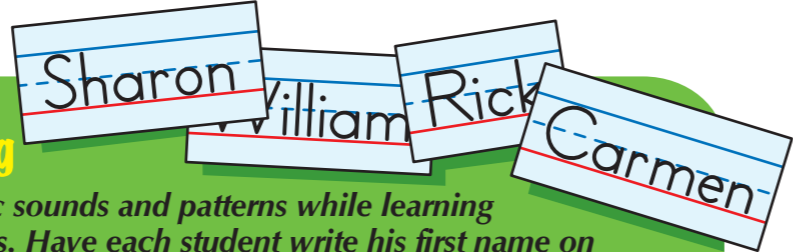
- 1 cup of teamwork (fish-shaped crackers)
- 1 cup of cooperation (sunflower seeds)
- 1 cup of respect (raisins)
- 1 cup of caring (candy-coated chocolate)
- 1 cup of fairness (pretzels)
- 1 cup of doing our best (fruit-flavored, bear-shaped gummy candy)





My Area of Expertise

Make children comfortable in a new classroom by letting them demonstrate or tell about something they can do well. Ask each child to think of something he can do well, such as ride a bike with two wheels, read, care for a pet, etc. Let each child draw himself performing his activity, and give a silly "superhero" title to the picture, such as Sam the Super Speller or Rebecca Queen Kitty Feeder. Post the areas-of-expertise pictures around the room so that children can look at their artwork for an instant boost of confidence!



Name Sorting

Reinforce phonetic sounds and patterns while learning each others' names. Have each student write his first name on a section of sentence strip or an index card. Show a student's card for reference, then have the class name the beginning sound, ending sound, vowel combinations, or other sound in the student's name. Then, choose attributes of the name to sort with other students' names. For example, if the name is Michael, invite other students whose names begin with M to come forward and show their cards. Other options would be to call students whose names have two syllables, whose names end in l, whose names contain the ae digraph, etc. Continue the activity using all the names.

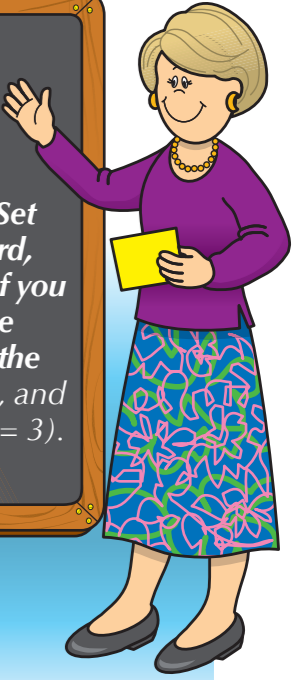


Put a new twist on the usual What I did this summer activity with this fun, interactive memory game, and be sure to have an atlas handy! Sit in a circle in alphabetical order by the first letter of children's first names. Each child will tell her name and then make up a place she went over the summer that begins with the first letter of her name. It can be a street in the community, a city, a state, a country, even a planet. She must also remember what each child said before her! For example, the first child may say My name is Amber and I went to Australia this summer. The next child may say This is Amber and she went to Australia. My name is Brad and I went to Burlington this summer, and so on. For younger children, eliminate the memory part of the game and simply let them take turns thinking of places which begin with the first letter of each child's name.

Game Show Review



Host a game show to boost students' confidence and help them recall important skills. Research to find out what skills your students learned in the previous grade. Then, divide the skills into categories, such as math, spelling, reading, science, and social studies. Set aside five index cards for each category. On each card, write a question relating to a skill area. For example, if you are teaching third graders and you want to review the second grade skill of fact families, on the card write the question What is the fact family for the numbers 3, 4, and 7? (the answer is $3 + 4 = 7$, $4 + 3 = 7$, $7 - 3 = 4$, $7 - 4 = 3$). Reward correct answers with praise.

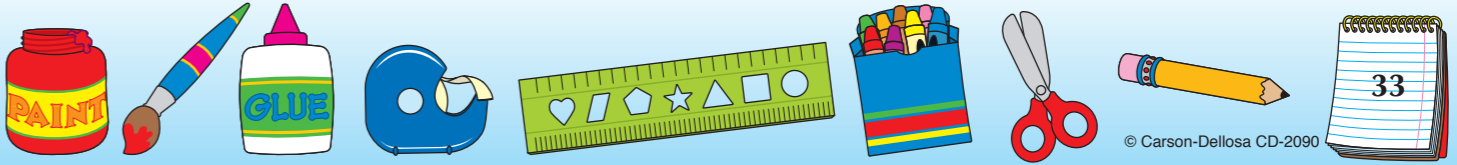
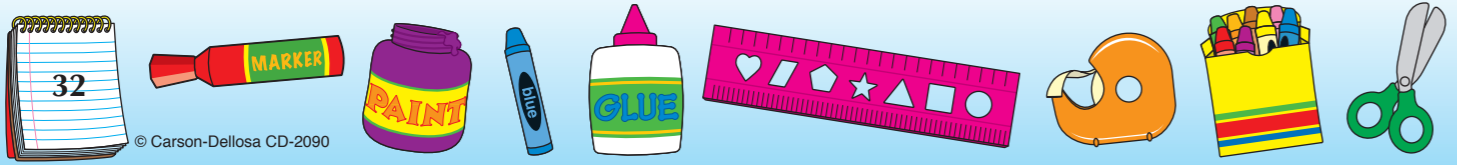


Numbers and Me

Challenge students to find out how important numbers are in everyday life. Ask students to recall some number skills that they learned in previous grades. Help them recall times when they have used numbers, such as counting the number of students in class, remembering the school bus number, cooking (measurement), or figuring out their allowances (money, addition, etc.) Distribute large sheets of light-colored construction paper and markers or crayons. Have each student write his name at the top of the paper, then draw a large "tic-tac-toe" design on the paper and illustrate a self-portrait in the middle square. In the remaining eight squares, draw objects with other important numbers, such as his bus number, classroom number, birthday written numerically, age, phone number, channel number and time of his favorite TV show, etc.



Guess What I Did Today! Start a family discussion about students' exciting first day or week of school with a take-home letter. Copy and distribute a Back-to-School Letter (page 38). Have each student fill in the blanks on the letter. You may wish to let children share answers with each other. Have students take the letters home to share with their families.



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