

Preparing for the First Few Days of School

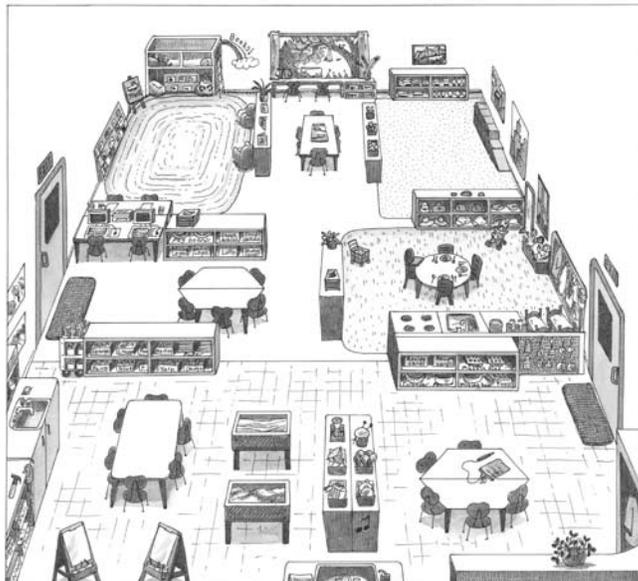
Welcome Families to the Program

- Obtain contact information from families.
- Review family and child records. Note information to make a meaningful connection at the initial meeting.
- Develop a plan for storing child and family information.
- Send a welcome letter to the child and the family. See the family connection CD-ROM for a template that can help you get started.
- Post a picture of yourself, an assistant, and other individuals who will be responsible for caring for the children. Include a short summary about yourself.
- Review *The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool, Volume 1: The Foundation*, Chapter 5 for ideas on getting to know families and making families feel welcome in your program.
- Plan a system for ongoing communication with families, e.g., a daily message board, phone calls, or weekly emails. See *Volume 1: The Foundation*, Chapter 5 for ideas on communicating with families.

Preparing for the First Few Days of School, continued

Arrange the Physical Environment

- Refer to the following resources for setting up the physical environment:
 - “Setting Up a Classroom for 20 Preschool Children” found on the CD-ROM
 - *The Creative Curriculum for Preschool, Volume 1: The Foundation*, Chapter 2
 - *The Creative Curriculum for Preschool, Volume 2: Interest Areas*
- Sketch a floor plan and seek feedback from your coach, mentor, or colleagues.
- Arrange the basic furnishings in the classroom.
- Assess the classroom materials for items that need to be replaced or bought.
- Keep a prioritized wish list of materials you would like to order.
- Label classroom materials, referring to *The Creative Curriculum for Preschool, Volume 1: The Foundation* and *Volume 2: Interest Areas* for guidance.
- Evaluate the current classroom materials available:
 - Remove any unusable materials, e.g., broken or missing items.
 - Organize materials by interest areas.
 - Select a limited number of materials for each interest area that would be most appropriate for the beginning of school, e.g., open-ended, familiar, limited supervision necessary.
 - Label and store remaining materials.
- Evaluate the materials to be sure that they relate directly to children's experiences and do not depict stereotypes. Consider the children's family backgrounds as you select materials and plan learning experiences.



Preparing for the First Few Days of School, continued

Arrange the Physical Environment, continued

- Keep an eye open for “found” items to make the environment comfortable and attractive, such as items from nature.
- Review and apply the guidelines found in *The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool, Volume 1: The Foundation*, Chapter 2 for making your space comfortable and attractive.
- Make sure there is a place to store everything to avoid clutter.

Plan Your Daily Schedule

- Find out the school or center’s schedule and get specific times for the following:
 - arrival and departure
 - meals and snacks
 - outdoors
 - nap or rest time
 - other factors that will impact the class schedule
- Review *The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool, Volume 1: The Foundation*, Chapter 2 and the appendix for a variety of schedules.
- Begin a rough draft of your daily schedule. Start with the “fixed” times, such as arrival, departure, lunch, and other events.
- Include times for large group, choice time, small group, read-aloud, and large-group roundup.
- Create your daily schedule using pictures and words. See the example in *The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool, Volume 1: The Foundation*, Chapter 2. If possible, use photos of the children in the classroom. Post near the group-time area for quick reference and use with children.

Preparing for the First Few Days of School, continued

Plan for Each Time of Your Day

Arrival and Departures

- Create a daily sign-in sheet for children to write or scribble their names on when they arrive. See *The Creative Curriculum for Preschool* Intentional Teaching Card LL42, “Daily Sign-In,” for ideas.
- Create a sheet for families to sign their children in and place it next to the children’s sheet. Use Intentional Teaching Card SE02, “Look Who’s Here,” to develop your opening routine.
- Create an age-appropriate, interactive attendance chart to use at group time.
- Review Intentional Teaching Card SE07, “Good-Byes,” for strategies on supporting children during arrival.

Large Group

- Decide what will be included in your opening routine. For example, you might sing a welcome song and then review the children’s attendance chart before having a group discussion about your study topic. If your program requires you to say the Pledge of Allegiance, you can do this during your opening routine.
- Review *Teaching Strategies Mighty Minutes* for welcome songs, such as *Hello Friends* (M78), that you can use during your opening routine.
- Determine where to hold your large-group meetings. If your classroom is not large enough to dedicate a separate area for group meetings, use one of the larger interest areas, such as the Block or Library area.
- Make sure you have access to electrical outlets near the large-group meeting area.
- Read *The Creative Curriculum for Preschool, Volume 1: The Foundation*, Chapters 2 and 4 to get a sense of what activities will occur during large-group time. The five teaching guides that complement *Beginning the Year* will explain what to do during each large-group time.

Transitions

- Talk to other teachers, your coach, or mentor about classroom management during transitions, e.g., cleanup, moving children from place to place, or preparing for rest.
- Locate the *Mighty Minutes* cards in *The Creative Curriculum System for Preschool* materials. Begin to learn several of the songs, chants, or simple games to use during transitional times.

Preparing for the First Few Days of School, continued

Plan for Each Time of Your Day, continued

Choice Time

- Read *The Creative Curriculum for Preschool, Volume 1: The Foundation*, Chapters 2 and 4 about choice time.
- Decide whether you will use an interest-area management system as suggested in *Volume 1: The Foundation*, Chapter 2, and create the necessary materials.

Read-Aloud

- Become familiar with the *Teaching Strategies Book Discussion Cards*. The teaching guides will tell you when to use the read-aloud strategy with selected books.
- Refer to *The Creative Curriculum for Preschool, Volume 3: Literacy* to learn more about various read-aloud techniques.

Small Group

- Review the guidelines for leading small-group experiences in *The Creative Curriculum for Preschool, Volume 1: The Foundation*, Chapter 4.
- Review a few of the *Intentional Teaching Cards* to become familiar with their structure.

Meals and Snacks

- Talk to veteran teachers, your coach, or mentor and refer to *Volume 1: The Foundation*, Chapter 2 about the process and guidelines for mealtimes in your program.
- Locate where children eat meals and snacks.
- Locate the child- and adult-size cleanup supplies if meals are served in the classroom. You'll want them readily available.

Caring for Self and the Classroom

- Make a sign with pictures and words demonstrating the steps for proper hand washing.
- Learn a hand-washing song or chant to use in the first few weeks as children learn the procedures. Refer to Mighty Minutes M06, "This is the Way."
- Label cubbies or spaces for each child's belongings. See examples in *Volume 1: The Foundation*, Chapter 2.

Preparing for the First Few Days of School, continued

- Create and post a job chart. Refer to *Volume 1: The Foundation*, Chapter 2 for suggestions on jobs that may be appropriate for your classroom. Review Intentional Teaching Card SE12, “Classroom Jobs.”
- Find out your program requirements for daily cleanup and sanitation of the classroom.

Rest or Nap Time (full-day programs)

- Label cots or mats and supplies for rest time use and determine storage areas.
- Locate relaxing music that can be used at the beginning of rest time.

Plan for Ongoing, Observation-Based Assessment

- Create a system for recording and storing observation notes. See *The Creative Curriculum for Preschool, Volume 1: The Foundation*, Chapter 4 for more information and ideas.
- Browse through *Volume 5: Objectives for Development & Learning*. Identify the colored band that is associated with the age-group or class/grade you teach. Become familiar with the information related to that colored band.
- Review the objectives and dimensions in *Volume 5: Objectives for Development & Learning*.

Preparing for the First Few Days of School, continued

Now that you've completed the checklist, take some time to review the daily plans included in this *Teaching Guide*. Begin gathering materials needed for choice time and small-group experiences. Browse through the social–emotional section of your *Intentional Teaching Cards*. These cards offer ideas for supporting children as they separate from their families. They also offer guidance strategies that will help you build positive relationships with children and guide their behavior during these first few weeks.

Have a great school year!

Refer to *Guide to The Creative Curriculum System for Preschool* for guidance on weekly planning.