
Chapter 1: I Got a Job. Now What?

It looks like all that hard work has paid off, you are officially a teacher.

1. **Get Organized.** Locate a calendar and mark off the days until the scheduled teacher in-service begins. In-service starts about a week before the students arrive. During this time you will meet as a faculty to prepare for the school year. You will also have department and grade level meetings. There may be some time for you to work in your room.

2. **Schedule time for yourself.** While you are counting down the days until school begins, schedule a couple of days for yourself. Get a massage, buy some new clothes, get a haircut, and do anything else that will require you to miss a day of school. Once the year starts, you will find it hard to take a personal day for these activities.

3. **Write down all your ideas.** Keep a small notebook with you at all times. You will find yourself constantly brainstorming, and you need to write these fresh ideas down. You will bring new concepts and presentations to your students and your school, so anytime you think...wouldn't it be neat if...write it down so you can develop it later.

4. **Start saving boxes and crates for storage in your room.** As a new teacher you will have scant furniture in your room. The good furniture has been salvaged by older teachers, so be prepared to be creative. The boxes and crates you find will also be a good transport system for you to carry items from your car to your room. Also, save old pillows, sheets, blankets, rugs etc. for use in your classroom on movie days, reading days, game days, or other special days.

5. **Drive by your new school.** Find as many different ways to travel to and from school as possible. Record your driving times and keep them in your glove compartment. Choose your favorite route and try it on your first in-service day before school begins. This will give you an accurate idea of your actual commute time in morning traffic. Make sure you try at least two different routes before school starts; you don't want to be late on your first day of school if one route is blocked.

6. **Scout out your new workplace.** While you are driving around your school, find the nearest post office for those bills you need to mail, local eating establishments for those days you forget your lunch, and the nearest stores for those last minute assignment materials or dinner on the way home. Don't forget to find a gas station.

7. **Get a copy of the district curriculum.** It might be a good idea to drop by the school or ask them to send you a copy of the district's curriculum guide. This is not necessary, but it may help you organize your lesson plan ideas for the first few weeks.

Other information you may request or locate are the national standards, state standards, and subject standards for the class you will be teaching.

8. **Call your mentor teacher.** Your school may have assigned you a mentor. Take advantage of your mentor. This person can give you insight about your school and your colleagues. Your mentor can also meet you before in-service and help you get into your room, gather materials, and start making copies. If you can't contact your mentor or don't have one, try getting in touch with another teacher from the campus.

9. **Put together an emergency bag.** Fill a bag with items that will be handy in case of a personal emergency. You may want to have a change of clothes in case you spill something on yourself. Don't forget to add personal hygiene items to your bag. You never know when you will forget your deodorant!

10. **Start a shopping list of things you need.** It is never too early to start thinking about items you will need in your classroom.

1. Organize the remainder of your summer.
2. Schedule time for yourself.
3. Keep a journal for ideas.
4. Start saving boxes and crates.
5. Drive by your new school and find different routes.
6. Scout out your new workplace.
7. Get a copy of the district curriculum.
8. Call your mentor.
9. Put together an emergency bag.
10. Start a shopping list for your classroom.

You Will Need....

There are items that I believe you should invest in or at least consider their value. Take these ideas and individualize them to fit your needs.

A LESSON PLAN BOOK

Check to see if your school provides you with a lesson plan book that they require teachers to use. If they do not require a certain format or do not require a lesson plan book at all, purchase one of your choice. There are many different formats, styles, and versions to choose from. Take your time in selecting one because it will be an organizational and bookkeeping tool for you. You may want to check into computer versions as well.

Your lesson plan book will serve many purposes. It is a great organizational tool. You will refer to it when putting together make-up work for absent students, you will use it in meetings with parents and other teachers, you will make notes to yourself as to how far each class progressed with the lesson, and you may even make notes for lesson improvement. Also, most schools require you to turn in some type of lesson plan. You can easily photocopy your lesson plans from your book. One of the most important functions of your lesson plan book is documentation.

If you don't find a lesson plan book that you like, don't be afraid to create your own. Many teachers I know have created their own templates. They either print out blank copies and write on them, or they type everything into their computer and print out completed forms. Don't be afraid to experiment with different lesson plan formats.

Teacher Tip

Document everything that you do. I will remind you of this constantly, because it is so important. It is sad to say, but you must prove that you make modifications for special education students, follow the curriculum, contact parents, contact other teachers, and attend meetings. If you can keep all your documentation in one place, it will save you a lot of time. Look for something that will allow you to not only write lesson plans, but record phone calls, meeting dates, and other correspondence.

A MONTHLY CALENDAR

If there is not a monthly calendar for the year in your lesson plan book, purchase one. You will be given many long term dates to remember, and a monthly calendar will help in long range planning, colleague's birthdays, secretaries day, and holidays. You may also want to invest in or use a large desktop calendar. It is a great place to leave yourself little messages and reminders. You can carry your small monthly calendar to and from meetings, and then transfer important dates to your desktop calendar. You don't want to be known as the teacher who always forgets to bring their class to the library, or the one who forgot to come to the all school assembly.

A RUBBER STAMP

Purchase a stamp that has your signature on it. This will come in handy when signing school passes, attendance strips, and the multitude of other paper work you are inundated with.

A CARBON MESSAGE PAD

This is a great way to facilitate documentation. Locate a memo pad that reproduces a carbon copy. Whenever you contact a parent, student, or other staff member, use your memo pad. The carbon is your proof that contact was established. This documentation will aid you in many situations. For example, you may enter a hostile parent meeting where the parents claim you have never contacted them about their child's failing grade. Your carbons will provide you with a record of phone calls made, notes sent home, and/or notes sent to other staff members concerning the child. Another plus comes from the fact that all your documentation is located in one place.

BINDERS - These will be come in handy while organizing your own materials. Since it will be your first time to teach a subject, you will be gathering and creating materials to facilitate your lessons. Label your binders and store any material related to the subject, novel, unit, concept, or system you are teaching. Next year before you teach this area again, you can flip through what you compiled last year and revise, organize, and familiarize yourself with the material. It is a quick and neat storage technique.

FILE FOLDERS- Some of you may choose to keep everything in a manila folder file system instead of binders. If you do this remember to label everything. Another great thing to do with your filing system is to color code it. You can buy colored folders or labels and color-code your files. For example, you can code all your fraction materials red and all your body system materials yellow. It is just another way to further organize yourself.

You may also use files in conjunction with the binders. I like to keep everything related to a unit in my binder; however, I keep copies of the worksheets in file folders. If you know you are going to use a worksheet, quiz, or other item that needs to be reproduced for your students, you can make copies and keep them in folders stored in the filing cabinet until you need to hand them out. These copies can be made weeks in advance so you are not rushed at the last minute. Then if you have leftovers, they can be saved for next year and easily located.

A COMPUTER GRADING PROGRAM - Some school districts have a computer-grading program that you should take advantage of, and if your school doesn't have one, they are easy to find or create on a spreadsheet. You can also download the programs from the Internet or purchase one at a computer store.

If you have access to a computer at school or have your own at home this type of program will save you hours of time. Students, parents, and special education staff will constantly want updates on your grades. If you have to average them by hand, it will become a burden and waste time. Most computer grade book programs re-average the student's score after a new grade is entered. Then you can print out a new grade report each week. This will allow you to scan weekly for students in need of assistance and provide you ample time to intervene. It also helps during progress report time and report cards. Your grades can be quickly updated and averaged so that your reports are accurate. Most of these programs come with other great features. You may be able to print individual reports to send home to students, print blank grade books, change the weight of certain grades, print seating charts, keep track of attendance, and a variety of other options that make these programs worthwhile to use. Check into these programs. Remember, though, to create a backup disk each time you change grades, and to keep a recent hardcopy handy just in case the unthinkable happens.

A STORAGE DEVICE FOR YOUR COMPUTER – Make sure you back up all your documents and emails on something. The school server will crash at some point and you want to make sure you have your hard work and documentation backed up. It also makes it easier to work from home.

BASIC DESK SUPPLIES - First, find out if your school district supplies you with these items, or gives you a budget for them. Then, start shopping.

- A stapler for you and one for the students
- White glue and glue sticks
- Scissors for you and extra ones for students to use in class
- Highlighters for test taking
- Vis a Vis pens and white board markers
- A good three hole punch
- An electric pencil sharpener for your students.
- Extra pens and pencils for the students
- Map colors for projects or grading in class
- Different types of tape
- Sticky tack for hanging things up in the hallways
- Paper clips
- Tacks
- Magnets to use on your chalk/white board
- A desk drawer organizer

Teacher Tip

Put your name on everything you take to school and eventually acquire during the school year. This includes your stapler, chair, desk, and erasers. People are much less likely to take something with your name on it. It is amazing how many items will disappear when a substitute is in your room. It is even more shocking when your stapler is found in another teacher's room. At least with your name on it you can retrieve it and sweetly ask, "Wow, how did this get in here?"

In-Out Boxes Don't forget to purchase what I call in-boxes and out-boxes. The students use these to turn in work. You will want each class to have its own in-box.

Teacher Tip

I recently attached clear plastic bins to my classroom wall. This allowed me to free up table space. I have the plastic file holders screwed into the wall and a table beneath them. On the table I have a pencil sharpener, hole punch, pen/pencil holder, and a lost and found box. The area under the table is used for storage. It helps keep all of us organized.

BREATH MINTS - These will come in handy after quick lunches, coffee breaks, or a long afternoon. Sometimes you might even need to pass them out to a student. Gum is usually against school policy. If your students have to follow school rules, you should as well.

TISSUE - Yes, you will get sick, as will most of your students. If you are teaching in the younger grades, most school supply lists ask for tissues, but the upper grades do not. However, even if your students bring tissue, it will be gone by Christmas.

PAPER TOWELS - Accidents will happen in your classroom. Spilled drinks, spilled lunches, broken projects, and other unimaginable disasters happen daily. Usually when this occurs the bathrooms will be out of paper towels as well. It is better to be prepared. I like to use Wet Wipes too because it tends to help with the stickiness.

ANTI-BACTERIAL GEL- Once again, you will get sick. It is inevitable no matter how much you wash your hands. I keep a bottle out for the students and a personal bottle in my desk. Think about all the little things that will pass germs like the doorknob, pencil sharpener, sneezed on papers, and tops of desks. Anything you can do to protect yourself and encourage your student's to do the same will be beneficial.

BABY WIPES – You can use baby wipes to clean your hands after using Vis a Vis markers or touching a student's belongings. They are also good to have around when the students need to clean their hands. This prevents them from having to leave your room to wash up.

DISINFECTANT – Stock up on disinfect spray and/or wipes. The wipes are great to wipe down desks, door handles, computers or even textbooks. Spray everything else. This is especially true during flu season.

ROOM ENHANCERS- These are mostly for you, but your students will like them as well. Plants will give your classroom a more homey feel, and they will also help you relax. Air fresheners will also change the mood of your room. Some teachers string up holiday lights to create a mood or to use for dim lighting when the overhead lights are turned off. A desk lamp is nice to have when you need light, but don't want to use the overhead lights. It is also nice to have your own cassette player or CD player in your room.

SNACKS- Keep a supply of your favorite coffee, tea, cola, or water in your room. There will be a coffee maker in the lounge, but you may want one in your room especially after you see the coffee pot in the lounge and taste what comes from it. I keep a stockpile of my favorite soft drink in my room, because it is cheaper than buying them from the machine. I also have a small refrigerator hidden in a corner to store my drinks and lunches. Some teachers have even invested in a microwave for the classroom. It is nice to have all these in your room for emergencies, but don't isolate yourself in your room. Eat in the lounge and get to know the other teachers, administrators, and staff that share the room. It gives you a chance to have adult contact during the day and it will save your sanity.

CLOTHING- You have a great excuse to go shopping. Read over the school dress code and make sure you have appropriate clothing. You are a role model for your students, so you need to dress professionally. However, make sure you are comfortable as well. You will be bending over, sitting, and walking all day long. Your clothes should allow for this. Don't forget comfortable shoes.

Your mentor teacher can be helpful with dress code issues. If your teacher handbook states that women should wear hose each day and men are required to wear ties, you may want to call your mentor and ask if this is a strict guideline for your campus.

Wow! It seems like a lot to get done doesn't it? If you make a list, most of these can be tackled at the same time and on the same day. Don't feel like you have to do all or any of these to be a great teacher and have a great year. Some of you may have a month to do all of this, some of you a week or two, and some of you may have no time because you were hired after school started!

You Will Need...Shopping Checklist

a lesson plan book
a monthly calendar
a rubber stamp
carbon message pads
binders
manila folders
in-out boxes
a computer-grading program
anti bacterial gel
disinfectant spray/wipes
breath mints or spray
comfortable shoes/clothes
snacks/drinks for your room

paper towels
tissues
air fresheners
a plant
desk lighting
a desk drawer organizer
storage device for computer
Basic Desk Supplies

OTHER ITEMS:
