

Preparation and Consistency Are Key—A Mother's Advice



I have been using what the Wongs teach for nearly twenty years. I instilled some of the most important and useful tips in my daughter, Rhiannon.

The Wong concepts that Rhiannon used made her student teaching experience, and her first year of teaching, enjoyable for both herself and her students. They have earned Rhiannon excellent evaluations from her supervisors.

Here are some of those tips.

1. Know what you want your students to do from the moment they arrive in the morning until they leave your classroom in the afternoon. Plan procedures for every situation you can think of, such as entering the room; unpacking; morning assignments; lunch count; transitioning from one subject to another; rotating in learning stations; turning in homework and classwork; going through the lunch line; hallway procedures; and packing up to go home. Have your management plan thought out and written down before the first day of school so that you are ready to present, model, and practice.
2. Show students what each procedure looks like and what it shouldn't look like. Rehearse them until students have the procedures down pat. Be prepared to revisit and re-practice periodically throughout the year, especially after extended vacations such as winter and spring breaks. Don't be afraid to tweak a procedure if it isn't working the way you envisioned.
3. Create an atmosphere of mutual respect and comradery in your classroom through morning meetings. Model cooperation and respect towards your students, their parents, and to your own supervisors.
4. Read *The First Days of School* and follow the Wongs' advice and methods. Re-read the book (I have read it several times) because it will remind you of possible scenarios that you may have forgotten or not thought of at all that necessitate having a procedure in place.

5. Rethink your procedures as you gain experience or change grade levels. Procedures may need to be tweaked for different groups of children, and different grades or ages of children.
6. Be consistent with your procedures and expectations. **CONSISTENCY IS THE KEY TO SUCCESS.**

I have read some of Rhiannon's evaluations and all of her supervisors have been very complimentary of her classroom management. Her student-teaching supervisor even commented that the second-grade class in which she student-taught was better behaved at the end of her student teaching than when she began.

Her current principal commented that her classroom management skills far exceed those of many seasoned teachers. She teaches fifth grade at Price's Fork Elementary in Blacksburg, Virginia.

It's all due to having a classroom management plan and taking the time to have the students practice until it becomes automatic.

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Preparation and Consistency Are Key—A Daughter's Reflection

I have just ended my first year of teaching, and I would like to reflect on what made it such a success. When I first decided to become a teacher, my mother, a veteran educator, urged me to take courses. One of my professors required *The First Days of School* for a classroom management course. Because I saw what my mother did as a teacher, I always knew that classroom management was the most important characteristic of an effective educator.

Likewise, as a first-year teacher, I knew that classroom management was the one thing that most new teachers struggle with. I knew that students thrive on consistency and routine, so planning my first year, and especially the first few weeks of teaching, was critical.

I used a strong (well-organized) classroom management plan because I have a very busy classroom, full of transitions that are made easy by the routines we have practiced and mastered. Each transition is the same; however, I play a different chime to indicate

which activity we're transitioning to. We've also rehearsed until we mastered which materials to take out for each study topic.

These are some typical procedures from my classroom *management* plan.

Greeting: I greet each of my students as they enter my classroom. Near the door, I have the morning routine posted, so they know to do these things each day:

- Unpack their book bags
- Turn in their ELO (Evening Learning Opportunity) into the proper subject pocket
- Move their name to the appropriate choice for lunch on the SmartBoard
- Place a chair at their desk
- Go to their leadership job and breakfast

Start of the Day Routine: When students return to the classroom, this is how they begin the day:

- Review the morning routine on the SmartBoard, which includes a thinking point and activity
- Complete their work
- Choose a book to read quietly from the containers on their group tables. The books are appropriate reading-level fiction and nonfiction, tailored to their individual interests, and are changed every two weeks or so.

Morning Meeting: Morning Meeting usually lasts twenty minutes and is meant to be quick and to the point to keep students engaged. This is the general format:

- A short classroom greeting students do together
- The morning routine that I read out loud
- Discussing the thinking point
- Reviewing the daily schedule
- An activity that gets students up and moving

These are some typical procedures from my classroom *instruction* plan.

Transitions: Students prepare for the next task by following these steps.

- I review the supplies they need to get out when they reach their desks.
- The students repeat the supply list back to me.
- I set an alarm for an appropriate time (one to two minutes).
- As students move to their desks to get out materials, I also prepare my materials and display them under the document camera.
- When the alarm goes off, every student has their materials out, hands on their heads, lips together, and eyes on me.

Language Arts Instruction: I teach Listen to Reading using a modified Daily 5 of four thirty-minute blocks consisting of these parts:

- Word work
- Work on writing
- Read to self
- Small group instruction

I allow a clean-up time between Language Arts and Special Activities. When students hear the timer, they know to clean up, and then wait quietly, hands on their heads, looking at me, for the next set of instructions.

These are **Special Activities** for when we leave the classroom.

Walking in a Line:

- All students face the same direction
- Keep one pace behind the student in front of them
- No leaning or rubbing against the wall as they walk
- Keep their hands to themselves
- Walk quietly

Upon returning from our Special Activity, we have about ten minutes before lunch to do our midday routine.

Midday Routine: I set an alarm for the amount of time we have before lunch for the students to do these things:

- Check their binder
- Get out their math materials to prepare for math, which follows lunch
- Complete any unfinished work from earlier in the day
- Wait for lunch instructions when the alarm goes off

Math: This follows immediately after lunch. Another fifth-grade teacher and I share some students, so as soon as they enter my classroom, the ones who transition to the other class take their materials and line up, waiting for the signal to walk to the other room. Once they depart, we start math.

- Warm Up Word Problem: A problem that directly relates to previously learned content. Students have five minutes to read the problem and work it out in their notebook.
- Review Word Problem: We then spend five minutes working it out together.

- Interactive Notebook: Students know to open their notebook to a fresh page or to the page we will be looking at or adding to. Because the interactive notebook involves foldables and manipulatives that students need to cut and/or glue in, we quietly cut and glue as needed.
- Direct Instruction: Whole group instruction for about fifteen minutes
- Fifteen-Minute Mini Rotations: We then split up and do three mini-rotations consisting of a computer center, seat work, and a group with me for further practice or remediation.

End of the Day Routine: Students do these things before they go home:

- Write their homework and daily points in their planner
- Check for mail to take home
- Pack up their book bags
- Stack up their chairs
- Stand quietly by their desks waiting for the dismissal bell to ring

I can't say that all of these procedures were my ideas because *The First Days of School*, my mother, and other teachers I have had the privilege to work with and read about have helped me tremendously.

I am very pleased that my students have performed well and met 75 percent and 70 percent for reading and math, respectively, in the standardized state assessments for achievement in the state of Virginia.

Although I feel my first year has been extremely successful, I'm already geared up with new ideas and so excited about my second year of teaching! I know this is my calling in life, and I am so thrilled to help shape the students that will lead our future.

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Harry and Rosemary Wong are happy to share this mother-daughter story. How to implement these procedures and many more are all explained in *The First Days of School: How to Be an Effective Teacher* and *THE Classroom Management Book*.