

Anna SZKOLAK-STĘPIEŃ

ORCID: 0000-0001-5957-5616

Uniwersytet Pedagogiczny im. KEN w Krakowie

First-Day of School, First-Day Success

Abstract

Crossing the school threshold, meeting new obligations, requirements and situations is an important moment that changes the lives of children so far. Especially the youngest who, on the one hand, want to go to school very much and, on the other hand, are afraid of it — not knowing their friends, colleagues and teachers.

The article *First-Day of School, First-Day Success* written on the basis of articles from the American magazine “Scholastic Instructor” presents, how to help you succeed in school.

Keywords: first day of school, success, “Scholastic Instructor”

Introduction

The beginning of school education is a turning point in a child’s life. Each first grader is very excited about entering a new environment, which is a new school. Every student who enters school for the first time is afraid of teachers and their peers. He is afraid that he will be able to find himself in an unknown place, among strangers. Then he undoubtedly needs the support of his relatives. However, it is very important that he gets help from all educational entities, and especially that he can count on his teacher-tutor.

Suggestions are presented below how to teach children simple procedures to successfully start school life, posted in the journal “Scholastic Instructor”.

“Scholastic Instructor” is an American magazine for all those involved in raising a child. The publisher of the periodical is Scholastic Corporation — a company known for publishing educational materials for schools, teachers, parents and children, and for their sale and mail-order distribution conducted

by book clubs, at education fairs and in the online store. It also has the exclusive rights to publish in the United States the *Harry Potter* book series and *The Hunger Games*. Scholastic Corporation is the world's largest publisher and distributor of children's books, with a history dating back to the 1920s (see Szkolak, 2014).

Teach little ones these simple routines to start off their school lives with success — suggestions

Check in, check out

This attendance system lets children check in and start their day with purpose and direction. Open a pocket folder and label the top of one side “In” and the other side “Out”. Laminate the folder and slit the pockets open. Then display the open folder within easy reach of children, such as on a low table or posted on a low bulletin board or wall. Put stick puppets that children have illustrated to represent themselves in the „Out” pocket (make sure the puppets are labeled with children's names). Next, write students' names on the board under a morning assignment, such as working on a puzzle, trying writing activity, or creating play dough shapes. As children arrive each morning, they can move their puppet to the “In” pocket and then check the board for their assignments. (Provide a visual clue such as a puzzle piece to aid emergent readers). At the end of the day, children can move their puppet back to the “Out” side before leaving (Caralee, 2010, p. 47).

Let's move to our morning circle

Invite children to hop, dance, wiggle, twist, and perform other fun actions to help get some of their sillies out on their way to circle or story time. Then, when everyone reaches the circle area (designated by an area rug, mats, or some other special marking), use this simple rhyme to signal to children what to do to prepare for the activity: Let's all take a seat-hands placed on your knees. Now it's circle time. Listen quietly, please! Add hand motions of desires.

Hands up!

Whenever children want to respond to a question, share a comment, or ask a question, have them use the “Lock and Lift” method to indicate that they want a turn to speak. Children simply “lock” their lips with their fingers, then press their lips tightly closed as they lift their hand into the air. Have them “Lower and Unlock” when you call on them to speak. To do this, children

lower their raised hand, “unlock” their lips, and take their turn to speak. You can also model the motions as a reminder for children to raise their hand and wait their turn to speak (this silent reminder is especially helpful during times when special guests or visitors come in to lead class activities). For a fun twist, cut, decorate, and laminate a large paper key for students to hold when they are speaking.

Story time selections

Use your story time routine as an opportunity to teach about the democratic process, counting, and simple graphs. First, select two books for which children can vote to be read at story time. Place the books on a table, along with a sheet of paper labeled with the title of the books. As children transition to the circle for story time, have them draw a tally mark or write their name on the paper under the book that they would like for you to read.

After everyone is settled, invite children to help count the “votes” for each book. Then share the book that got the most votes. To create more informed votes, at the end of story time you can preview the selection for the next day. Use two books by the same author or about the same subject or theme for easier comparison.

Lining up patterns

Give children practice in patterning as they line up or wait in line. When lining up, you can call of groups of children to order themselves by a pattern of eye color (such as blue, brown, blue, brown) a particular clothing attribute (such a sleeve length: short, long, sleeveless, short, long, sleeveless), height, or seasons in which their birthdays fall. Then, while waiting in line, challenge children to create patterns using different body positions. For example, they might repeat a pattern of crossed arms, arms by side, and hands on hips. They can also create patterns by alternating leg positions, making different facial expressions, facing different directions (forward, backward, to the left), and so on (Ephraim, Dana, 2010, p. 40).

Group gathering

Reinforce number skills when grouping students. Decide how many groups you wish to assemble. Assign each child a number within that range (for example,

1 to 6), making sure there will be the same number of members in each group. Then roll a number cube and call out the number it lands on. (Use two cubes if there are more than six groups). Have the members of that group get together. Ask children to tell which number comes next and have that group assemble. Continue until the highest-numbered group gathers. Then invite the numbers assigned to the lowest number to assemble. Have the group with the next number gather, and so on, until all the groups are assembled. If desired, use a different range of numbers each time you group children. You can label slips of paper with the corresponding numbers, put them in a bag, and draw a number to start the grouping. You might also use this idea for turn-taking activities.

Hurray for recess!

Before children split up for recess activities, lead them to an area in which you want them to return at the end of recess, either inside or outside the school. Then recite this rhyme as a reminder of your meeting place: "It's time for recess, give a cheer! When recess ends, we'll meet back here." When children meet at the designated area at the end of recess, prepare them for going indoors with this rhyme: "Recess is over. We're together again. Line up, all quiet... time to go in. Remember to share any helpful rhymes with substitute teachers." (Rhodes, 2010, pp. 67–68).

Conclusion

Crossing the school threshold, meeting new obligations, requirements and situations is an important moment that changes the lives of children so far. Especially the youngest who, on the one hand, want to go to school very much and, on the other hand, are afraid of it — not knowing their friends, colleagues and teachers.

Every change in a person's life brings with it stress. Children and parents alike feel it. Stress is a dynamic adaptive reaction between the possibilities of an individual and the requirements of a situation, characterized by an imbalance. The teacher, parent and guardian play an important role here, because not all children have adaptive and self-regulating abilities. Some of them show very good adaptation. From the first days of their stay at school, they feel well and satisfactorily fulfill the tasks related to the role of a student and a colleague. However, a significant part shows adaptation difficulties, consisting in the fact that they come to school reluctantly and feel bad in it, due to the lack of grat-

ification of a number of important needs, or they do not meet the requirements set by the school properly.

The above-mentioned suggestions will certainly contribute to the student's success.

Bibliography

- Caralee, A. (2010). *Creating Curious Thinkers*. "Scholastic Instructor": *Back to School*, September, p. 47.
- Ephraim, S., Dana, T. (2010). *Great Group Games*. „Scholastic Instructor”: *Fall*, September, pp. 38–42.
- Rhodes, M. (2010). *First-Day Success*. "Scholastic Instructor": *Back to School*, October pp. 67–68.
- Szokolak, A. (2014). *Gry i zabawy na start edukacyjny — przegląd artykułów z amerykańskiego czasopisma "Scholastic Instructor"*. "Pedagogika Przedszkolna i Wczesnoszkolna", 2, no. 1 (3), pp. 177–183.