

Just ASK Mentoring Series

Opening of School Checklist

Checklist Organization

The checklist includes over 140 tasks and suggestions organized into the following areas of focus:

- Teachers and Staff
- Students
- Parents
- Community
- School Operations and Management

How to Use This Checklist

1. Read through each section of the extensive list of possible actions.
2. Identify the appropriate items for your opening of school year work. Indicate item selection on the “Person Responsible” column.
3. Establish a priority level for each action.
4. After completing the selected task, record next steps.

Focus on Teachers and Staff (part i)

Task	Person(s) Responsible	Our Priority Level (1st - 5th or N/A)
Identify vacancies (current and potential) and develop an approach for handling interviewing and hiring face-to-face and virtually as needed.		
Design master schedules, planning for multiple configurations of onsite and distance learning.		
Update teacher handbook and post on school internal website; include date each document created.		
Meet with instructional coaches, team leaders, and lead mentors; to clarify their roles, solicit suggestions, and offer support.		
Have one-on-one conversations with each teacher to clarify teaching assignments and additional responsibilities and to offer support.		
Personally welcome new teachers as soon as possible; explain the induction program, including orientation and mentor support.		
Collaborate with the mentoring team to plan a year-long site-based induction program. Planning forms are available in the Mentoring Resources Big Picture Collection .		
Provide mentors multi-faceted support throughout the year. Use the online Mentoring Resource Collection , <i>The 21st Century Mentor's Handbook</i> , and Mentoring Memo as part of that support.		
Ensure that copies of the learning standards, curriculum guides, and other teacher resource materials are available in hard copy and online.		
Schedule ample time for teachers to prepare their teaching environments (onsite and/or virtual) prior to the first day of school.		

Focus on Teachers and Staff (part ii)

Task	Person(s) Responsible	Our Priority Level (1st - 5th or N/A)
Arrange for distribution of keys and name badges to all teachers.		
Work with appropriate personnel to plan how best to analyze and use most recent student data.		
Identify information and materials that all staff needs to have on hand either onsite or in home offices for the opening of school.		
Celebrate the accomplishments of collaborative teams from the previous year. Let them know that their successes and struggles will need to be shared so all can learn from one another as you go forward.		
Prepare a “Procedures for the First Day of School” document.		
Engage in discussions about “lessons learned” for working productively and positively with parents as partners in the education of their children.		
Communicate any changes to the supervision and evaluation process; include information about who will supervise which departments and teachers.		
Select a protocol to use in determining individual student and group readiness to learn; consider how to address not only learning targets and power standards but students’ social and emotional status as well.		
Review evolving district guidelines and initiatives and plan an interactive way to share them with staff; emphasize the “evolving” nature of plans.		
Provide appropriate student services personnel opportunities to explain their role and the role of district-level human resources and student services personnel.		

Focus on Teachers and Staff (part iii)

Task	Person(s) Responsible	Our Priority Level (1st - 5th or N/A)
Explore best practice in providing timely growth producing feedback and grading in the various classroom configurations being used at the school.		
Encourage teachers to have upbeat and engaging opening of school activities that transcend filling in forms or hearing about rules.		
Orchestrate opportunities for staff to explore instructional practices that are in the news (deeper learning, student engagement and empowerment, promoting equity, social-emotional learning, etc.)		
Arrange for instructional technology and media specialists to lead staff in exploring changes in policies and new instructional and organizational technologies now available to support instructional initiatives.		
Arrange for the distribution/installation of technology tools new to individual teachers or groups and identify needs for professional learning on their use.		
Emphasize/publicize the availability of free, online video resources to support instructional planning and delivery of instruction, e.g., Teaching Channel, Khan Academy, Edutopia, and Colorin' Colorado.		
Communicate expectations and guidelines about teacher websites/webpages.		
Be explicit about appropriate use of school computers and personal use of social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, etc.)		

Focus on Students (part i)

Task	Person(s) Responsible	Our Priority Level (1st - 5th or N/A)
Prepare, mail, and place on website information for students and families about the opening of school, including a welcome letter from the principal and necessary forms to be filled in online or returned to school; provide this information in multiple languages as needed.		
Publish student supply lists online and in the opening of school mailing; make arrangements to provide those supplies to students who cannot afford to buy them and or do not have ready access to stores.		
If holding an onsite new students orientation, schedule buses and arrange for student guides.		
Even if you host an onsite new student orientation, plan, video, and disseminate a virtual tour; use students as tour guides and narrators when possible; in addition to providing essential information, feature both staff and facilities. Post on school website and schedule a “Grand Opening” event complete with balloons, banners, and bubbles.		
As appropriate, make arrangements for personalized onsite orientation for special needs or marginalized students and their families.		
Publish a list of clubs, athletic opportunities and resources available online, at the school, and/or available through various reputable community organizations.		
Publicize registration dates and process as well as a listing of required documents for new students/families and display throughout the community. Ask religious institutions, neighborhood associations, and other organizations to publicize that information.		
Display signage throughout the building that helps both new and returning students navigate any new layout and traffic patterns.		

Focus on Students (part ii)

Task	Person(s) Responsible	Our Priority Level (1st - 5th or N/A)
Decide how to handle storage of student personal items and school materials; determine if and how lockers will be used.		
As appropriate, assign cafeteria seating with signage to identify seating arrangements and/or make arrangements for meals to be provided to classrooms.		
Ensure that lunch menu selections meet the needs of a variety of dietary restrictions.		
Arrange for a system to determine students who are on free/reduced lunch status and expedite their ability to access meals.		
Prepare the welcoming announcement for the first day of school. Consider a video opening message from the principal and staff members that is upbeat, positive, and even humorous rather than heavy on rules and regulations.		
Ensure that parents, nurses, and clinic aides work together to handle medical needs of students.		
Ensure that all IEPs and 504 plans are complete so that special education students are appropriately placed.		
Contact feeder schools to determine which students may need special support or attention.		
Identify students who are no-shows and make plans to register them in a timely manner.		
Review the records of students who have struggled in the past; plan to provide additional support as the school year begins.		
Plan an in-school mentoring program matching older students and younger students.		
Re-examine the school's character education program for revisions and updates.		

Focus on Students (part iii)

Task	Person(s) Responsible	Our Priority Level (1st - 5th or N/A)
Watch out for “loners” or students who may need special support.		
Have administrators and counselors visible during class changes in the first week of school to project a friendly and helpful climate; this reinforces the importance of being on time for class in a positive manner and provides opportunities to assist students having difficulty finding their classrooms.		
Implement systems for distribution of technology resources to students.		
Task technology specialists with setting up procedures and routines for troubleshooting and repair of technology resources.		
In collaboration with all staff, communicate to students appropriate and inappropriate handling and use of school-provided technology resources.		
Ensure that students understand how and when personal electronic devices can be used on campus.		

Focus on Parents (part i)

Task	Person(s) Responsible	Our Priority Level (1st - 5th or N/A)
Ensure that the school website is easy to navigate and continuously updated throughout the year.		
Create a web-based Parent Resource Center that includes logistical information of interest to parents with links to resources on ways to support and enhance student learning, recommended books, webinars, and brief staff-created video clips; be sure to feature counselors, social workers, and instructional technology coaches and specialists.		
Include the Parent Handbook in the online Parent Resource Center so all parents have access to it either online or offline.		
Throughout the year, have a few parents review the website with special attention to the Parent Resource Center and provide feedback about the user experience.		
Post contact and opening of school information on the school message board, on community bulletin boards, and ask civic and religious organizations to spread the word.		
Publish/distribute a school year calendar with information about school events, report card distribution, parent meetings, etc.		
Work with the PTA to decide on meeting dates, newsletter publication dates, dates for special events for parents during the year, fundraising, etc		
Arrange for PTA representatives to contact new families and welcome them to the community.		
Plan an Open House for new parents and students to tour school before the opening of school and post a recorded version on the school Website.		
Determine how to orchestrate Back-to-School Night virtually or face-to-face and establish date(s).		

Focus on Parents (part ii)

Task	Person(s) Responsible	Our Priority Level (1st - 5th or N/A)
Arrange for translations for mailings for non-English speaking parents.		
On opening day, make sure guidance staff is prepared for parents who come to register new students.		
If needed, have translators available on opening day to assist with non-English speaking registrants and their parents.		
Communicate how and why technology is embedded in the teaching and learning process.		
As appropriate, explain the use of online resources (like Canvas, Schoology, gotLearning, etc.) so parents and students know how to access information.		
Make parents aware of digital resources, such as Khan Academy and Colorin Colorado (support in English and Spanish) that they can use at home.		
Work with the PTA to decide on meeting dates, newsletter publication dates, dates for special events for parents during the year, fundraising, etc		
Use and ask staff to use more than one social media platform to communicate with parents.		
If school entrance includes security procedures, make sure that directions are clear and visible.		
Ensure that the process of reporting a student absence is available for parents.		
If available, inform parents about how to make payments for school-related items (e.g., meals, uniforms, etc.)		

Focus on Community

Task	Person(s) Responsible	Our Priority Level (1st - 5th or N/A)
Determine community resources available to families and publicize that information online or through flyers.		
Establish a school/business partnership that will benefit both the school and the business.		
Solicit contributions from community businesses or organizations to provide beginning-of-the-year school supplies for economically disadvantaged students.		
Reach out to community leaders (religious, civic, business, etc.) to build alliances and support systems for the school.		
Attend and present at community meetings to personalize school leadership.		
Become a member of community organizations (like Optimist Club and Rotary Club) to keep informed about community events and publicize school-related events and initiatives for community members.		
Seek community members to work with and support school programs (internships, mentoring, technology support, career role models, video guest speakers, fundraisers etc).		
Find out which families need tech support for Internet access, devices, or tutoring in the use of technology; then contact local businesses to ask for specific assistance with identified technology needs for this school year.		

Focus on School Operations and Management (part i)

Task	Person(s) Responsible	Our Priority Level (1st - 5th or N/A)
Implement school health and safety plan to include CDC, federal, state, local, and/or district regulations and guidelines about air quality, social distancing, hygiene, PPE, quarantine procedures, and monitoring procedures.		
Double check supplies of PPE, cleaning and sanitizing materials, and equipment to maintain complete compliance with health and safety requirements.		
Test the bell system and prepare the bell schedule for the upcoming year.		
Change hall locker combinations and repair broken lockers.		
Make sure that all summer repair jobs have been completed.		
Check for the completion of technology work that was scheduled for the summer.		
Inspect the building and the grounds to make sure they are in good shape for the opening of school; remove graffiti and plant some flowers.		
Move delivered items to a secure area to avoid clutter and possible misplacement.		
Post bus routes, directions, and other essential information in highly visible places.		
Prepare hall bulletin boards that are welcoming, informative, and promote student involvement.		
Have copiers serviced so that they are ready for teachers when they return.		
Work with technology support staff to assure proper functioning of all available technology.		
Order needed classroom and office furniture.		

Focus on School Operations and Management (part ii)

Task	Person(s) Responsible	Our Priority Level (1st - 5th or N/A)
Walk through the building with the building supervisor/head custodian on a regular basis to make sure everything is in order.		
Recognize custodians for the extra responsibilities they have this year.		
Ensure that handicapped access to the building is clearly delineated.		
Work with district transportation department to determine bus loading and unloading scheduling and procedures; Be sure that bus drivers are both well informed and feel a part of the team.		
Inspect the schools grounds, especially playgrounds and playing fields, for any safety hazards.		
Review security measures (cameras at the entrance of the school, visitor sign-in/registration procedure, etc.) to make sure everything is functioning as it should.		
Make a year-long schedule for required fire drills.		
Work with appropriate staff to ensure that gymnasiums, other athletic facilities, and all equipment is maintained and used in ways that protect the health and safety of all.		
Ensure that clerical staff members are made to feel that they are valuable members of the school community.		
Establish dates for school pictures.		
Review and sign any necessary contracts (yearbook, uniforms, etc.)		
Devise alternate bell schedules (late openings, early closings, etc.)		
Create crisis plans to deal with emergencies that might occur during the year.		

Focus on School Operations and Management (part iii)

Task	Person(s) Responsible	Our Priority Level (1st - 5th or N/A)
Frequently recognize the contributions of cafeteria staff, bus drivers, and custodians.		
Make sure all communication devices are operational.		
Keep records of what worked and did not work to use in planning for next year's opening.		