

## 24. Kick-Starting the Day

... with more than a smile and a “hello”

Have you ever noticed how first thing in the morning some students come in with a smile, but others drag themselves to their desks looking like they would rather be anywhere but there?

*The students were huddled outside the school eagerly waiting for the bell to allow them entrance. The teacher on supervision wandered over to them to see why they appeared so excited to get to class and overheard students talking.*

*“I wonder what it’ll be today?” the first said.*

*“I bet it’ll be a joke,” replied another.*

*“Nope!” put in a third. “It was a joke on Tuesday. Gotta be different today!”*

*When the teacher inquired about what the students were discussing, one of them told her, “It’s the morning kick-start! It’s cool!”*

### Ten Ways to Kick-Start the Day

1. Occasionally greet students at the door with a handshake and address each one by name. (*Good morning, Miss Jones.*)
2. Have a minimal clues message waiting on the board for them to solve immediately. For example: To\_\_ y we \_re going to \_\_\_ gy\_ to p\_\_\_ b\_\_ll.
3. Feature a cartoon or joke on the overhead for students to see when they enter.
4. Meet students at the door wearing a hat that will fit with a particular lesson during the day. Keep them in suspense until the lesson.
5. Begin the day by reading a humorous poem, such as one from *Where the Sidewalk Ends*, by Shel Silverstein.
6. Display a chant or short song on the board or overhead. Teach it immediately and begin the day with the group chanting it.
7. Have the pole and noose for the game Hangman drawn large on the board. Before they do anything else, students must figure out one thing they will be doing that day by playing this game.
8. Begin with a brief naming activity where each student says his or her name and a greeting of choice. Examples: “Hi, I’m Anna.” “Cheers from Derek.” “Yo, bro, Cal here.”
9. On a rotating basis, let students take attendance “the old-fashioned way” by calling out names and checking. Add your name to the list, so that you must answer “present” too. The attendance-taker gains a sense of worth.
10. Model an unusual greeting—a salute, bow, curtsy, “alien” expression, “Yo,” “Top of the morning,” or “Greetings”—when meeting students at the door, and encourage them to respond the same way.

## 25. Opening a Lesson Well

... so that all of the students are engaged to learn

Have you ever thought that you spend more time “getting ready to teach” than teaching?

*The students were silent. They sat in awe, wide eyes focused on the teacher who was quietly and slowly digging around in a big, brown-paper shopping bag. What would she bring out? They knew that as soon as that bag showed up, something interesting was going to appear from it. Suddenly, out popped a miniature statue of the Sphinx. There was a mutual gasp. “Yeah!” one student shouted with joy, “Today we get to write about Egypt.”*

### Ten Ways to Open a Lesson Well

1. Begin by capturing the attention of all with a well-established cue, such as a particular sound, maybe a whistle, bell, or piece of music, or a visual signal, perhaps a hand raised.
2. Use “wait time.” Avoid starting until all students are attending.
3. Use the brown-bag technique by drawing from the bag surprise items pertaining to the lesson.
4. Use a colored overhead in a darkened room. Ask students to observe it silently for thirty seconds and to speculate about why it’s there.
5. Wear a hat that is specific to the lesson or subject. (One teacher always wore an Italian beret when it was time for students to do art.)
6. Provide a few general clues that invite students to guess what they will be doing. “It’s Science. We’ll look at something that has an effect on how we come to school.” (weather)
7. Tie the lesson to students’ interests. For example: If teaching a lesson on long division, begin by inviting students to think of anything—candies, hamburgers, baseball cards, bracelets, movie passes—they would like to have 100 of. Ask them to use their “choices” in such tasks as dividing the 100 items among twelve friends. Or, if the task is a writing project, provide an umbrella theme, perhaps adventure, then allow students to choose specific topics, such as camping or playing hockey.
8. Explain the purpose of the lesson. Students are more interested if they know why they are doing something.
9. Explain your expectations for the lesson. At the lesson outset, tell students exactly what they will be expected to do.
10. Use alert, confident body language and demonstrate passion for what you are about to teach or share.

## 26. Closing a Lesson with Impact

... instead of just “working till the bell”

How often have you been in the middle of a sentence when the bell sounds and students start packing up and rushing off?

*The teacher was watching her Grade 6 students leave at the end of the day when she heard James ask Billy, “Did we have Social Studies homework?”*

*Billy replied, “Did we even have Social Studies today?”*

*The teacher sighed. So much for what she thought was a powerful lesson about governments leaving an impact.*

### Ten Ways to Close a Lesson with Impact

1. Watch the time and leave two or three minutes for closure.
2. Insist that students spend a few seconds in silent reflection to encourage information retention.
3. Ask students to jot down what they learned in their journals.
4. Provide an oral summary of the lesson. (See STOP below.)
5. Invite students to do the summary orally. (*Tell me what we talked about ... Summarize for me ...*)
6. Call for a silent response from every student. (*Close your eyes and summarize in your head.*)
7. Link the closing to your opening activity. (*We started today by ... and we learned that ...*)
8. Note the relevance of the lesson. (*We just learned that ... because ... This ... will help us when ...*)
9. Invite students to pair up and share what they just learned.
10. If time has truly run out, then at the least quickly say what you have just done.

**S** “We Started the lesson ...”

**T** “The Topic (Theme) was ...”

**O** “Our Opportunities for practice were ...”

**P** “The Purpose of learning this is ...”