

Before School Starts...

Banner Bonanza

Summer is the perfect time to get ahead of the game by making banners for the upcoming year. Crank up your favorite graphics program on the computer and start printing! Make a few banners for back-to-school and room labeling; then get creative with monthly or seasonal slogans—such as “Let’s Talk Turkey,” “Happy Ho-Ho-Holidays,” and “Everything’s Green; It’s Spring!” Save time by using a color ink cartridge when printing. If that’s not an option, black-ink banners can be jazzed up with markers. Once back at school, laminate your banners for durability. Now you’re ready for a year of fun!

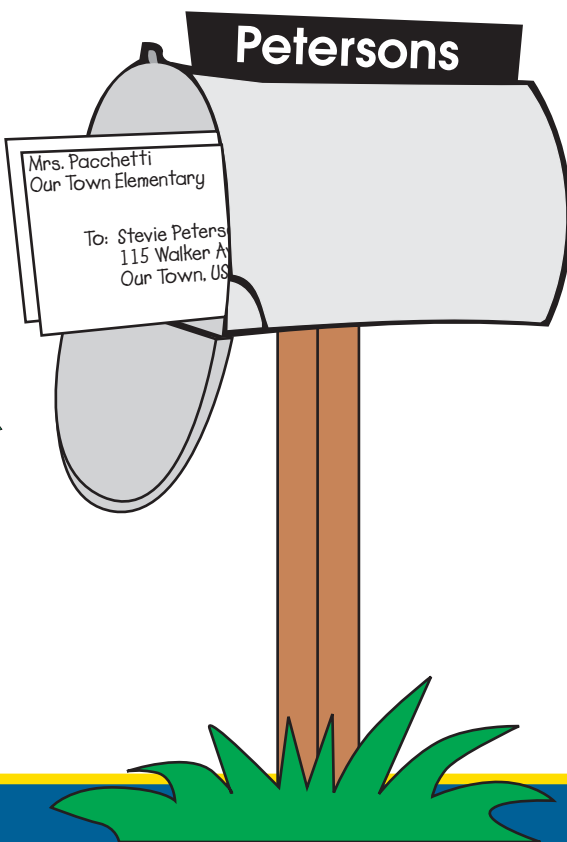
Vicki Pacchetti, N. Bethesda, MD



A Surprise In The Mailbox

Your new students will be eagerly awaiting that first day of school after receiving this surprise from you. To prepare, visit the bargain table of a local bookstore or use all those bonus points with your summer book order to purchase a class set of a favorite paperback story. Mail a copy of the story and a welcome letter to each of your students, introducing yourself to the child and his family. For added fun, ask each child to complete a follow-up activity after reading the book—such as drawing a picture of his favorite part of the story—to bring to school on the first day. Little ones will already have something in common as they share their illustrations of the story. A perfect plot for happy characters in a new setting...and they all lived happily ever after!

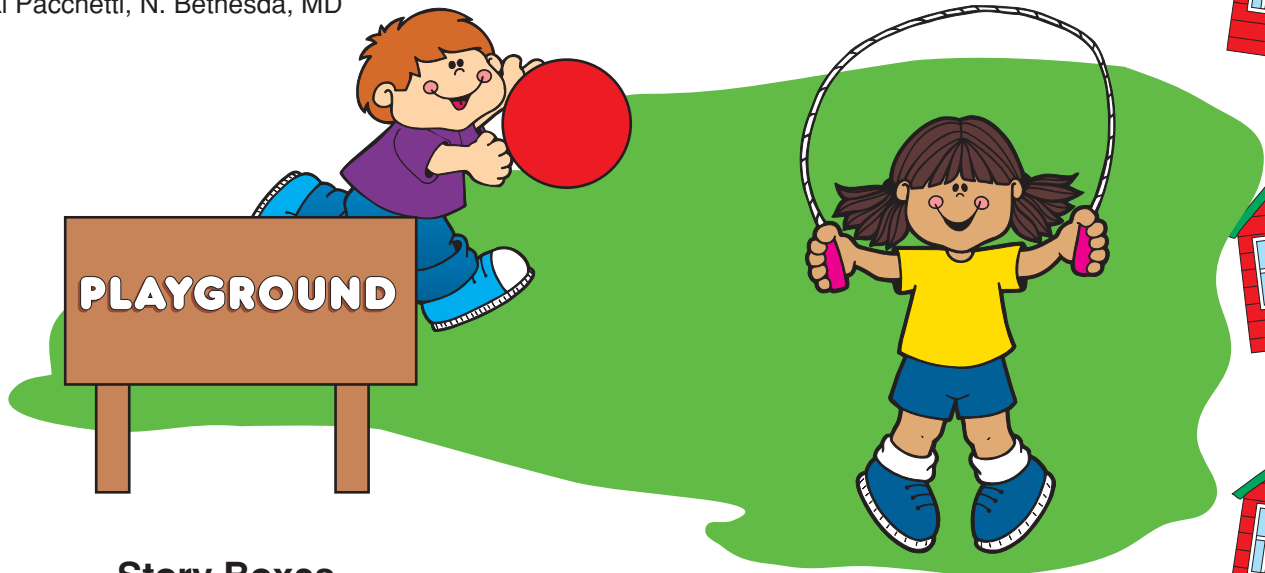
Vicki Pacchetti



Before-School Play Date

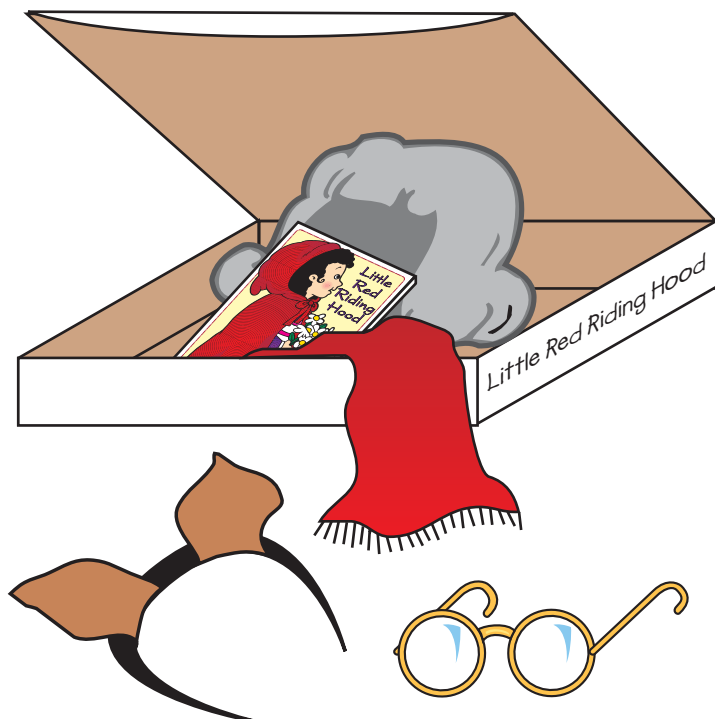
Have an informal get-together to alleviate some of the stress that the first day of school brings. Before the start of school, invite your new students (accompanied by their parents) to a local park or the school's playground for an afternoon of fun. Take this opportunity to mingle with different families and to get to know your new children. If desired, provide inexpensive snacks—such as juice and cookies—to gather the little ones together and talk about the first day of school. The transition to school will be made easy for children when they recognize the familiar faces of their new classmates.

Vicki Pacchetti, N. Bethesda, MD



Story Boxes

Keep children's literature favorites in mind as you rummage through summer's garage and yard sales. When possible, purchase inexpensive clothing, accessories, toys, and other items to use as props for favorite books. Then ask your local pizza parlor for some unused pizza boxes. Cover each box with Con-Tact® covering; then use a permanent marker to label the top and side edges of each box with a book title. Store the book with its props in the corresponding box. Then place a few boxes in your reading center for children to explore. Also invite parents to check out boxes to share with their child at home. Storytelling has never been such fun!



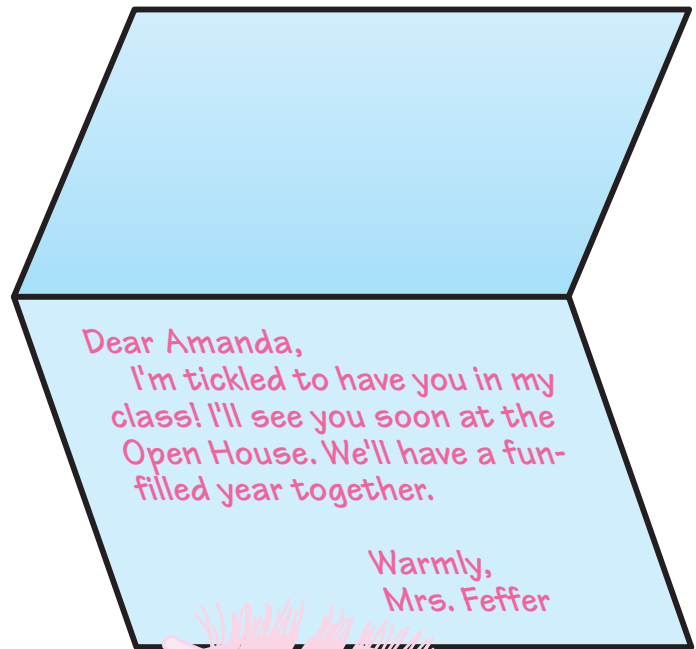
Vicki Pacchetti



A Fine-Feathered Welcome

Start working on the link between home and school *before* school starts with a welcome note mailed to your new students. To add a special touch to the note, include “I’m tickled to have you in my class!” with your message; then place a craft feather inside each notecard before inserting it in an envelope. Little ones’ anticipation of the first day of school will grow when they receive your fine-feathered welcome.

Marsha Feffer—Pre-K
Bentley School
Salem, MA



A Perfect Fit!

Show each of your students how he fits in as a unique and important part of your class with this idea. Purchase a puzzle with at least as many pieces as your number of students. Write a different student’s name on the back of each puzzle piece. Duplicate a brief note titled “You’re An Important Part Of Our Class!” for each student. In the note, include hints to help parents prepare their child—and themselves—for the first day of school. Also describe several fun activities you have planned for the first few days. Be sure to instruct the child to bring the puzzle piece with him to school on the first day. Mail a copy of the note and a puzzle piece to each child. On the first day of school, invite the children to help you put the puzzle together. Discuss the importance of each piece to the puzzle; then compare the importance of each student to the class. What a perfect fit!

Suzanne Moore, Irving, TX

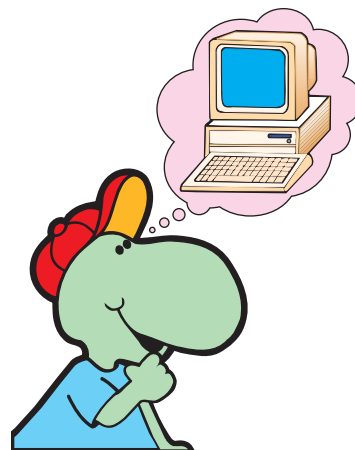


Guess What You'll See

Spice up your before-school letter to students and parents with this fun guessing game. After introducing yourself and the fun things to expect in kindergarten, include some clues—such as those shown—about special items youngsters will find in your classroom. Ask parents to write their children's guesses beside the clues, then send the letter to school on the first day. Write the answers on the chalkboard so that you can help the students check their guesses; then invite the children to find the actual objects in the room. What a great way to get to know the new surroundings!

- This is a big, green rectangle that hangs on the wall. You write on it with chalk. What is it? (*chalkboard*)
- This looks like a small TV. It has another part with letters and numbers on it. You can press the buttons and play games with this machine! What is it? (*a computer*)

Marcia Boone and Robin Gattis—Gr. K
Seagoville Elementary
Seagoville, TX



Summer Fun

Invite students to bring summer memories with them to school on the first day. Mail each student a sun shape cut from yellow construction paper along with a welcome note. Ask the parents to help their child recall fun activities, vacations, or other memorable events that took place over the summer, then decorate the sun cutout with photos, small souvenirs, or drawings of their summertime fun. Ask the child to bring the completed sun to school on the first day. Invite her to share her sun with her new classmates. Afterward, display the suns on a bulletin board titled "Summer's Done, But We Had Fun!"

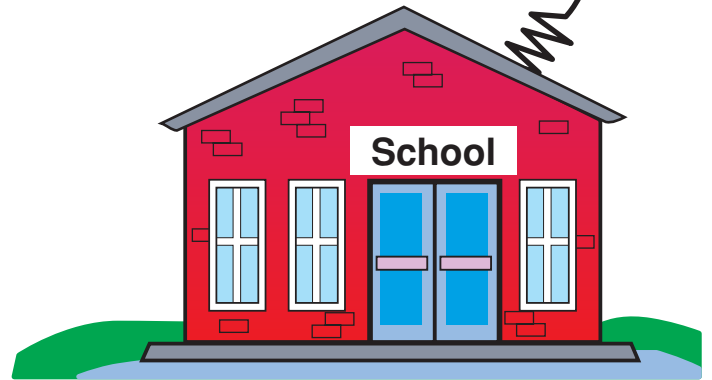
Jennifer Barton—Gr. K
Elizabeth Green School
Newington, CT



Just A Phone Call Away

Welcome new students and families to your classroom with a phone call before school starts. Talk to the parents about the first day's routine; then introduce yourself to the student and tell him something fun to expect on the first day of school. Your phone calls will be more personable than mail—and less expensive, too!

Brenda Hume—Gr. K
Sangaree Elementary
Summerville, SC



Before-School Tour

Ease anxieties and calm fears by meeting each child individually with her parents before school starts. Send a postcard to each student welcoming her to your room and designating a special time for her family to visit you at school. During the visit, show the family around the school or center and explain classroom procedures to them. Describe volunteer opportunities and invite the parents to sign up. Be sure to give the family an opportunity to ask any questions. Before each student leaves, have her make a nametag to wear on the first day of school; then take an instant photo of the child. Label the picture with her name. Review the photos prior to the first day of school so that you will be able to put names with faces. You'll find that meeting your new students and their parents before school starts eliminates a lot of first-day confusion. It's well worth the effort!

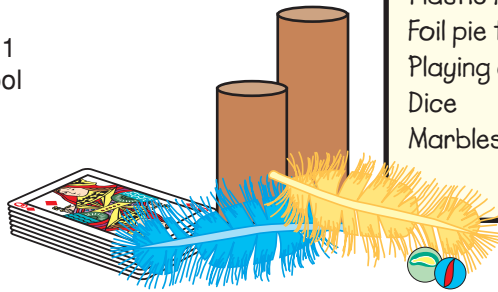
Cindi Zsittnik—Pre-K
Boonsboro, MD



Recyclable Roundup

Get ready for the many projects you have planned with this helpful tip. Before school starts, send parents a letter asking them to save recyclable household goods that can be used in the classroom—such as egg cartons, coffee cans, and cardboard tubes. Suggest that parents post the list at home as a reminder. Invite them to send their contributions to school at any time during the year. With this early effort, you will be assured of having a classroom supply of requested items whenever they are needed.

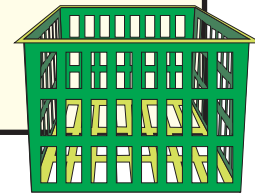
Betty Silkunas—Gr. 1
Oak Lane Day School
Blue Bell, PA



Dear Parent,

Our classroom is a busy, hands-on learning center. Many of our projects require recycled goods from home. If possible, please send any of the following to school at your convenience.

- Buttons, feathers, and sequins
- Coffee cans with lids
- Yarn
- Shirt cardboard
- Styrofoam and cardboard meat trays
- Paper towel and toilet tissue rolls
- Caps from liquid laundry detergent
- Scoops from powdered drink mixes
- Plastic mesh berry baskets
- Foil pie tins of all sizes
- Playing cards
- Dice
- Marbles



Dear Corey,

Our names are Millie, Tillie, and Princess and we are waiting for you in Mrs. Jones' room at Stevensville School. We can't wait to meet you!

We are soft, furry, white and brown gerbils. We live in an aquarium and it is filled with things for us to chew. We love paper rolls and boxes. Will you bring some to school for us?

Come and see us soon.

Your friends,



Millie

Tillie

Princess

Greetings!

Even the most reluctant youngsters will want to come to school after receiving this fun letter. Instead of sending each student a welcome note from the teacher, try sending a message from the classroom pet. Write the note from the pet's point of view, welcoming the child to your classroom and telling him about the school. Mail the notes before school starts so that students can look forward to meeting their new furry—or wet, or feathery—friend. See you on the first day!

Beth Jones—Junior K
Stevensville School
Stevensville, Ontario

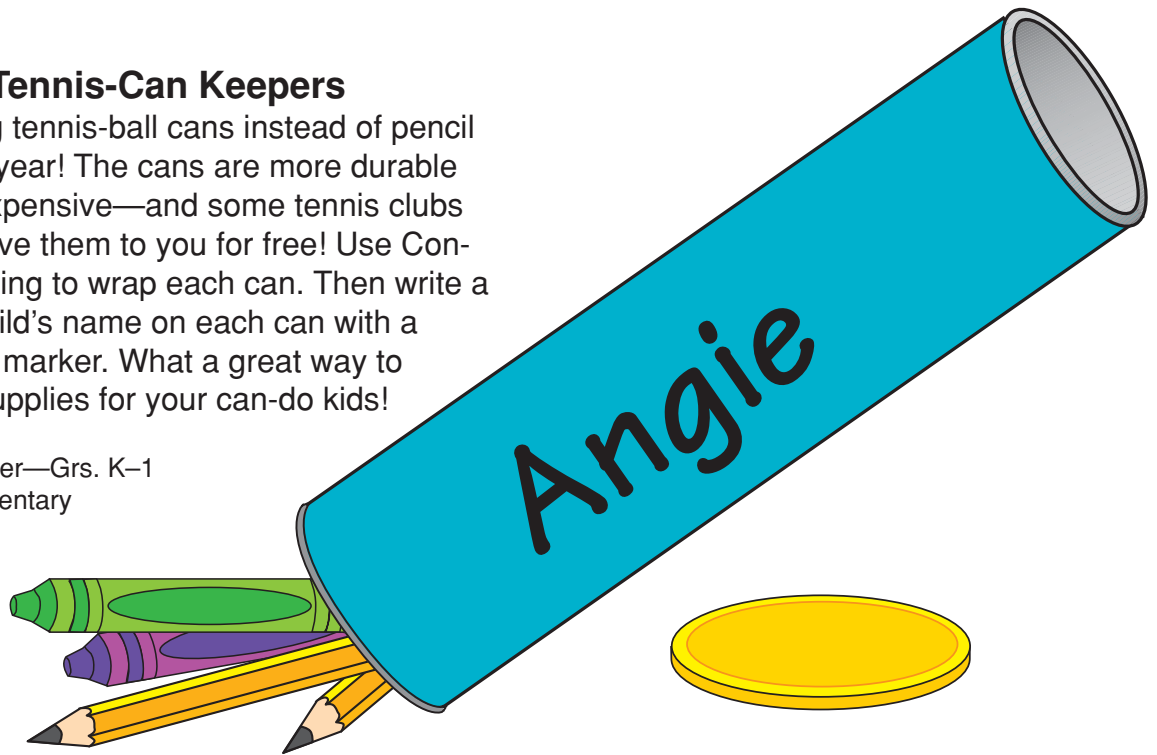


Organizational Tips

Tennis-Can Keepers

Try using tennis-ball cans instead of pencil boxes this year! The cans are more durable *and* less expensive—and some tennis clubs will even give them to you for free! Use Con-Tact® covering to wrap each can. Then write a different child's name on each can with a permanent marker. What a great way to organize supplies for your can-do kids!

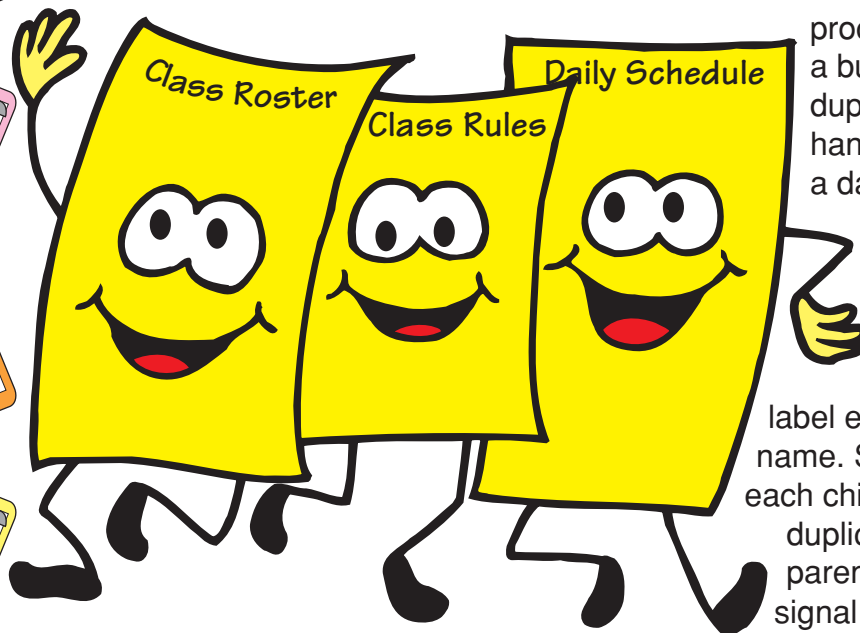
Tara Kicklighter—Grs. K-1
Bunnell Elementary
Bunnell, FL



Check The Yellow Pages

These handy yellow pages will answer common questions and explain classroom procedures without leaving you with a busy signal. Before school starts, duplicate important and informative handouts—such as a welcome letter, a daily schedule, a class roster, field-trip dates, birthday celebrations, and school/class rules—onto yellow paper. Title a class supply of pocket folders “Our Classroom Yellow Pages”; then label each folder with a different child's name. Send home a set of handouts in each child's folder. Throughout the year duplicate important information for parents on yellow paper. This will signal parents that they need to add the information to the folder. So let your pages do the talkin'!

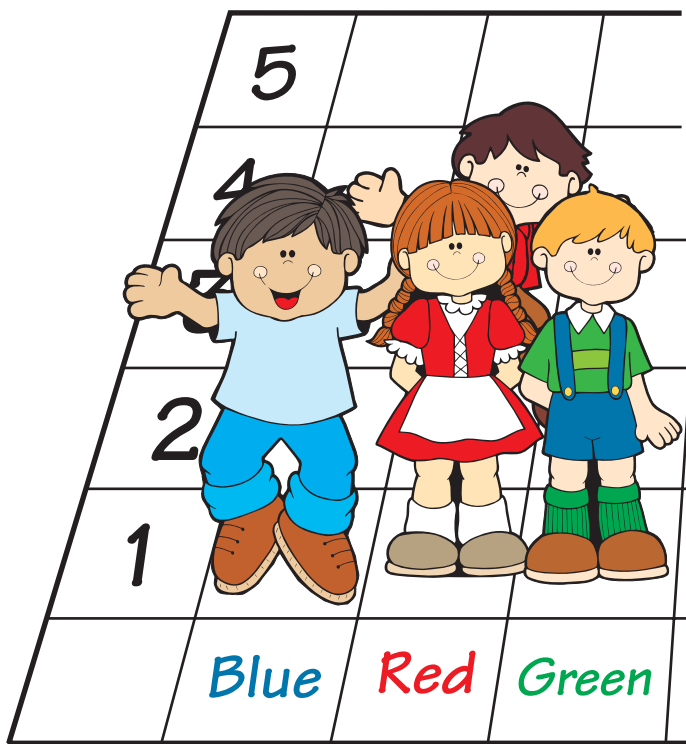
Suzanne Moore
Irving, TX



Medicine Time

Use an alarm clock to remind yourself of a student's medication needs. Simply set the alarm for the time of the child's dosage; then when the alarm sounds, send him to the clinic or office to take his medication. No more worrying that you might forget! This method also works well for substitutes or even for the child in your absence. It's medicine time!

Robin Gattis—Gr. K
Seagoville Elementary
Seagoville, TX



Gigantic Graph

Making a human graph is easy with this huge grid. To prepare, use a permanent marker to draw a simple grid on a king-size, flat bedsheet. Then have the children actually stand or sit in the boxes as part of a people-graphing activity. The sheet can be washed, dried, and folded for easy storage when not in use.

Marcia Boone and Robin Gattis—Gr. K
Seagoville Elementary
Seagoville, TX

