

# First CLASS

A resource for new teachers in New York City

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## Dear New Teacher,

It's been nearly two months since school started. Like most new teachers, you're probably still spending class time teaching, modeling, and reviewing classroom routines and procedures with your students. This month, *First Class* features resources to help you and your students master classroom routines in order to maximize teaching and learning time. We also have other useful information, such as an HR checklist and helpful tools for communicating with parents and families (especially useful during parent-teacher conference season).

As a preview, next month's issue will be dedicated to sharing findings from the Six-Week New Teacher Survey. Data from this survey will be used to evaluate and strengthen the quality of school-based and citywide new teacher supports. If you have not yet completed the survey, please check your email to find an invitation to participate (sent on October 20th).

After you have explored the resources below, let us know what you think in this brief (just four questions!) *First Class* [reader survey](#). We are eager to have your voices and opinions shape the content of future editions.

Sincerely,

The *First Class* Team  
[NewTeacherSupport@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:NewTeacherSupport@schools.nyc.gov)

## Classroom Culture and Management

### Before saying "go," stop to check for understanding

#### *How do I effectively transition from giving directions to student work time?*

Spending a minute checking for understanding after you give directions will save you a lot of time in the long run. When you clarify expectations and instructions from the start, you have less undesirable behavior to manage later. Check out these [three easy strategies](#) that you can start using right away.



## Time Management and Organization

### Communicate with ease

***E-mails, phone calls, notes, texts, meetings...how do I track all of my parent and student communication in an organized way?***



Streamline your student and parent communication efforts with these tools:

1. There are many free text-messaging services designed for teachers such as [Remind](#) or [Class Messenger](#). Consider using these tools or similar ones to remind parents about upcoming [parent-teacher conferences](#) and keep students on track with their assignments in a convenient and organized way.
  - o **Reader tips:**
    - Be sure to speak to your school's parent coordinator to learn about school-wide efforts to communicate with parents that may already be in place.
    - Read more about each service here: [Remind's overview](#) and [Class Messenger's overview](#).
2. Conduct productive and solutions-oriented conversations with your students' parents and guardians throughout the year. Download this [editable planner](#) as a template for how to prepare for, engage in, and follow up after each conversation.

## Content and Curriculum

### Featured resource of the month

#### ***Checking for evidence of learning***

In the Classroom Culture and Management section above, we shared strategies for checking to make sure students understand directions before you say "go." Checking for understanding of learning can happen in the format of a classroom routine or procedure, too. For example, "Do Now" or "Exit Ticket" tasks are routines that can serve as opportunities to check students' understanding of content. Here are eight [Do Now and Exit Ticket prompts](#) (Wiggins and McTighe) that can be modified to check for understanding of content in any subject area or grade level.



## Words of Wisdom from Experienced Teachers

### Using classroom routines during instruction

***How do I integrate classroom routines into my instruction?***

Here is a student self-assessment strategy that can easily become a classroom routine during whole group, small group, or independent practice.

Two sixth grade ICT teachers at Ozone Park's M.S. 137 explain: "Our students use these self-assessment cards [pictured on the right] to let us know if they are understanding content or directions or if they need help. During whole-group instruction, if we are explaining something or giving directions, we will say, 'Self-assessment check,' and the students hold them up. If the students are working independently and we are circulating among them, they will keep the cards on their desks and flip them to what best fits their understanding. It alleviates students' discomfort with relaying that they don't understand."



Source: "Inside My Classroom," [www.UFT.org](http://www.UFT.org)

The cards read: "I understand" (green), "I'm still trying" (pink), and "I'm stuck and I need some help" (orange). You can modify these expressions to best fit the needs of your grade level or content area.

**Reader tip:** In order to turn this into a routine, students need explicit modeling and scaffolded practice after you initially introduce using self-assessment cards. Plan to integrate practice opportunities several times in each lesson for a few weeks until students need only a cue, like "self-assessment check," to know what to do.

## Mentoring and Virtual Support

### Your mentor's classroom: A laboratory for your learning

#### *What can I learn from an intervisitation to my mentor's (or a colleague's) classroom?*

Looking for new solutions and ideas to help improve your teaching practice? Visiting a mentor or colleague's classroom is a great place to find inspiration. Yet once you're there, it can be difficult to capture everything you want to remember. It's also easy to get distracted by other new ideas that pop up during the visit. Here are some tips for keeping your intervisitation focused and productive:



1. Plan your intervisitation with your mentor or colleague in advance based on what you want to observe. For example, if you want to see a specific classroom procedure in action, such as turning in homework or preparing students for small group work, ask your mentor or colleague exactly when you should be present to see it.
2. Clarify your role during the intervisitation. Establish whether you will be a "fly on the wall" or if your mentor wants you to engage in the lesson.
3. Keep detailed notes during the intervisitation. If you are a "fly on the wall," here is an example of a [note-taking template](#) to help you plan, record, and process what you observe. If it's expected that you jump in, take a few moments to capture your takeaways immediately after you leave.
4. Debrief the intervisitation with your mentor or colleague. Make a point to follow up to ask your mentor to make his/her thinking "visible" for you. These insights can shape the way you approach your own decisions about what you do with your students.

## New Employee Nuts and Bolts

## New hire checklist



### *Have I done everything I need to do as a new employee?*

Here is a helpful [checklist for new hires](#) created by HR Connect. It will help ensure you're taking advantage of all the benefits available to you as an NYC teacher.

## Extra, Extra!

### **This month on the *First Class* website:**

Aligned to this issue's theme:

- "Big" and "small" strategies to reinforce rules, routines, and expectations
- A video library of teachers demonstrating classroom routines and seamless transitions

Other topics of interest to new teachers:

- A list of DOE online communities for teachers (content-specific, interest-based, and more)
- A collection of election-related resources for all grade levels

Visit the [First Class](#) website

**Now that you've read *First Class*, we'd love to hear your thoughts! Please take a minute to share your feedback with us by completing a brief four-question survey.**

[Take survey](#)