The Ontario Teacher Day-One Checklist

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Five jobs carry the first instructional day: Belong, Orient, Teach, Notice, Close. Nothing here has to be finished perfectly — Day One only needs to make Day Two better.

1 · BEFORE STUDENTS ARRIVE

- [ ] Entry path clear, seating usable, opening task visible from the door
- [ ] Class list printed, with name pronunciations written out for yourself
- [ ] Accommodations, accessibility needs and urgent IEP information reviewed
- [ ] Materials for today's one learning task ready and within reach
- [ ] Dismissal confirmed for every student, including bus and pickup changes
- [ ] One quiet minute to decide what today actually has to accomplish

2 · BELONG — THE FIRST TEN MINUTES

- [ ] Greet every student personally at the door
- [ ] Use names; ask how each name is said and how the student wants to be addressed
- [ ] Post the first direction where students can read it, rather than saying it once
- [ ] Give one task students can begin without asking for help
- [ ] Provide a quiet way in for late arrivals — no re-run of the opening for an audience
- [ ] Offer an opt-in route into any connection activity

3 · ORIENT — TEACH ONLY TODAY'S ROUTINES

- [ ] Entry and belongings
- [ ] The attention signal
- [ ] Asking for help
- [ ] Getting and returning materials
- [ ] Movement and transitions
- [ ] Recess, lunch and dismissal

Teach each routine shortly before students need it: explain the purpose, model it, practise it once, then use it.

4 · TEACH — ONE REAL LEARNING EXPERIENCE

- [ ] Accessible: every student can begin without help
- [ ] Low risk: nothing heavily graded on the first day
- [ ] Open: more than one reasonable response
- [ ] Authentic: recognisably the subject, not a filler activity
- [ ] Circulate and observe rather than instruct continuously
- [ ] One standing extension: "Make it harder and show that it still works."

5 · NOTICE — FOUR KINDS OF CLUES

- [ ] Academic: reading, writing, oral language, number sense, prior knowledge
- [ ] Learning Skills: responsibility, organization, independent work, collaboration, initiative, self-regulation
- [ ] Learner: who needs directions repeated, who begins alone, who waits for reassurance
- [ ] Social: who gravitates together, who is on their own, who quietly supports a peer

Record observations as questions. A first impression is a hypothesis. Learning Skills judgements require evidence gathered over time (Growing Success, 2010).

6 · CLOSE — THE LAST TEN TO FIFTEEN MINUTES

- [ ] Two or three reflection questions in an age-appropriate format
- [ ] Take student questions
- [ ] Preview Day Two: what it looks like, what to bring, one thing to look forward to
- [ ] Walk through dismissal before it happens

NOTICE → WONDER → NEXT STEP

After students leave. Write behaviour in the first column, a question in the second, and one change in the third.

WHAT I NOTICED	WHAT I WONDER	WHAT I WILL TRY TOMORROW