

Madison Leintz

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My classroom is in a small school in rural North Dakota. I am a general education teacher, and I have a classroom of 18 kindergarteners this year. I do have a couple children with special needs and a lot of really great parents. I teach in a very supportive community that really takes an interest in students within the school setting. I, as a teacher am always looking for really great ways to get my parents even more involved within the classroom setting. Using *A Checklist for Schools*, I have created six strategies for my classroom. These are some strategies that I plan on using in my classroom throughout the school year:

Parenting

Parent Mentor Program

Something that I would like to implement to provide extended support beyond the classroom and school is to provide my kindergarten parents with a mentor parent that came help them through the kindergarten years. I would set up a parent mentor for any parent who has a first child kindergartener, a child with special needs, and also any other parent that would benefit from or want a parent mentor. Of course, this is an option for the parents, it would not be required. The parent that has a child with special needs would also have a mentor that has a child with special needs so that they can talk and ask questions about the whole process. A first time parent having their first child go to kindergarten might be a little nervous and have a lot of questions that they might not feel comfortable asking the teacher. I would definitely emphasize how beneficial this mentor could be, especially for parents that have a child with special needs because it would be extremely beneficial. This mentor would also just be someone that they could confide in and get to know to help them get involved with the school. At the beginning of the school year I would send home the following letter:

Dear _____,

I am so excited to have your child in my classroom this year. I understand that starting kindergarten can be a scary thing, for both the parent and the child. It can be an emotional time as your child is truly growing up! It might be the first time your child has been away from you for a full day or even just a few hours. As the teacher, it is my job to help you feel as comfortable as possible with this transition. First of all, I would like you to know that I am not only here for your child, I am also here for you. I want you to know that my door is always open, and I am here to help make this transition a smooth one.

I am also excited to tell you that we have a new program in which you can choose to have a parent mentor. This would be a parent who has gone through this transition a time or two before and would be willing to answer any questions that you may have. This parent would be able to help you get involved in the school, and just kind of show you the ropes. I would make my best effort to align each of you with a parent that I think would be a good fit. This is something I am very excited about. This is not required, but I think that it would be a great opportunity to take advantage of!

Please let me know if you are interested by bring this bottom of this slip to the open house night!

Thank you so much,

Miss Leintz

Please check one!

_____ Yes, I would LOVE a parent mentor!

_____ No thanks, I would not like to have a parent mentor at this time!

Parent's Name(s):

Child's Name:

Communicating

Miss Leintz's News

To communicate better with parents, I would like to send home a weekly class newsletter, physically and digitally. Every Friday, I would send home a newsletter about the following week. This would have a little bit about what we will be learning, what specials we have that week, special events, any other important information, and finally a little parent inspiration. This would be a brief newsletter that a parent could refer to. According to Scholastic's website, it is beneficial to keep it short and sweet in order for parents to actually take the time to read. This is something similar to what I used to get while in elementary school. After creating the template, this is an easy way to keep parents involved and in the loop when it comes to their child's classroom happenings.

<h1>Miss Leintz's Classroom News</h1> <p>12/18/17-12/22/17</p>	
<p>Monday: Pajama Day—wear your comfy PJs! Special Guest Reader! PE</p>	<p>Parents, This week is Holiday spirit week! The days are listed in our daily calendar. Remember, school resumes on January 3rd, 2018! Please enjoy the holiday break with your child, and Happy New Year! Thanks, Miss Leintz</p>
<p>Tuesday: Sock Day—wear a pair of fun socks! Library Day—please bring book back! Music</p>	
<p>Wednesday: Dress in winter colors—blue, white, etc. PE</p>	<p>Reading/Language Arts: Math: SANTA Math Science/Social Studies:</p>
<p>Thursday: Hat day—students may wear hats all day! Computer Lab Music</p>	<p>Art:</p>
<p>Friday: Holiday Sweater Day! Holiday STEAM challenge! Music</p>	<p>Inspiration Corner: “This is where an inspirational parent quote, or extra parent information would go”</p>

Learning at Home

Kindergarten Readiness Night

Something that kindergarten teachers in my hometown do is Kindergarten Readiness Night. This is an evening during the spring before the child starts kindergarten where the parents and the children come to the school into a kindergarten classroom for a couple of hours. This is a learning even for the whole family. If I did this within my classroom, I would include a few different activities, an activity for the whole family to do together, then an activity for the children to do while the parents have a little session learning about what kindergarten will be like for them and their child. This gives both the parents and the child a chance to go into a kindergarten classroom, explore a little bit, and ask any questions they may have. This would be beneficial because then the next fall will not seem so scary because they kind of know what to expect. Then, I would also include a couple of books about kindergarten, like *The Night Before Kindergarten* and *Countdown to Kindergarten*. This is something that encourages learning at home by encouraging the parents to read with their child and talk about what kindergarten will be like. I would send a flyer home with all of the preschool parents, hang it up around the community, and also post it on the school's social media pages to try to reach as any families as possible. This is a flyer I would send and post:

Kindergarten Readiness Night

Miss Leintz, other teacher, and principal would like to invite your family to Kindergarten Readiness Night. This will be an evening of fun, learning, and getting ready to send your child off to kindergarten. It will be held on May 15, from 5:00-6:30pm. You and your child will get to explore the classrooms, do an activity together, and learn about what kindergarten will be like. This would be a great opportunity to learn about our school system and meet both of the teachers and the principal of the school. We will answer any questions you may have and finally, we will be giving each family a book or two to read with your child over then summer. Please call the school at (701)-888-8888 to register your family. We are excited to meet you!



Volunteering

Mystery Reader

Volunteering is an important part of any classroom. As a teacher I will encourage a lot of parents/other family members to volunteer within my classroom. One thing that I really want to encourage my family members to do in my classroom is come in as mystery readers. I think this is a fun way to get parents involved, and it is always good for children to hear a different voice read books sometimes. This would be sent out within the first few weeks of school. I would probably like a parent to come in once a week or so to keep students and parents excited about being a mystery reader in my classroom. However, after reading a couple of articles, I would want my parents to feel extremely comfortable doing this, if they do not feel comfortable reading to the whole class or reading in general, I would ask if they would want to read to a small group or even do something else with us, maybe a science experiment or math rotations. I would ask if the parent wanted to read a book they bring from home or if they would want me to pick a couple out for them. I used a model from Fairy Dust Teaching to create this. This is what I would send

home:



WANTED: MYSTERY READERS

Who? Parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and other special people. We want YOU to be a Mystery Reader in our classroom this year!

Why? Students LOVE special volunteers in our classroom. We want you to share in our learning and spend some time in our classroom!

What? All you need to do is sign up! You can bring your favorite read-aloud from home, or borrow a book from our class library. It is up to you!

How? Go to www.signupgenius.com/LeintzMysteryReader to fill an open day! Keep in mind times are flexible, so you can choose which part of the day works best! Simply pick a day and comment a time! If you have any questions, feel free to stop by or email missleintz@email.com

Thank you in advance for taking the time to volunteer in our classroom, we appreciate you!

Decision Making

Parents, We Want Your Help!

It is important to include parents in the decision making process. It is important to involve them in major school decisions, classroom decisions, and most importantly decisions regarding their own child. To incorporate decision making within kindergarten, I would love to have parent attend collaboration meetings. This meeting would include the kindergarten teaching team, probably the first grade teaching team, and finally some parents. This would be an informal meeting where we brainstorm classroom ideas, content, etc. I will use this toward the second half of the year. I will send home a letter to the parents to encourage them to get involved in these meetings, because I value parent's opinions. They know their child best and know what they would be engaged in and how they learn best.

Parents, we want your help!

Dear Parents,

I, along with my team teachers, want your help in planning for our children. Because you know your children best, we think that it could be really beneficial for you to come to our planning evening and share your ideas with us. Is there something your child has been wanting to learn? Do you have a great idea of a math station? Do you want to help decide how your child learns the information? If you answered yes to any of these questions, we encourage you to attend our next collaboration session. It is on Monday, January 8th at 5:30 pm in my classroom. We meet once a month, so I will begin including these dates on the weekly newsletter. This a great opportunity to get involved in your child's education. Even if you do not have any ideas right now, we still want you to come to our meeting because we value your opinions! Snacks and refreshments will be provided!

Thanks, we hope you can attend our next meeting,

Miss Leintz

If you have any questions, please stop in, call at (701)-888-8881, or email me at MissLeintz@email.com

Collaboration with Community

Reading around the Town

This is also something that I did while I was in Elementary School that I absolutely loved! This is an event that would go all school year, September through May. The students would be sent home with a reading log. They would need to read at least 15 minutes per day for at least 15 days a month (these requirements might be different). This could be the child reading books independently, reading with a family member, etc. However, no watching or listening to books on Youtube. This encourages parents to read with their child or at least encourage their child to read. Businesses around town would be asked to sponsor a month. During this month when a child brings the reading log back, they will get a certificate in which they can take to the business and receive their prize for that month. An example might be the local pizza place giving each child who completes this a free personal pizza or the grocery store giving them some kind of treat. This encourages the community to be involved within the classroom. Below is an example of what the certificate would look like as well as the reading log that would be sent home.

Congratulations, you completed your reading log for this month!

_____ completed the reading log for this month! This month is sponsored by _____ . Stop by and present this certificate to receive your prize!

Date: _____

Expires: _____

Thank you for sponsoring this month and being involved in our classroom! We appreciate what you do for our community!

Teacher Signature

References

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