“First Days” Activities

These activities are modelled and followed by a reflection activity that uses the following questions:

- What did the teacher learn about the students? How did this activity help students learn about the teacher and teacher expectations? In other words what tone does this activity set? What did students learn about each other? What are the pros and cons of this activity? Is this lesson worth behaving for?

“First Days” Activity 1: Each group receives a copy of the first day handout. Students complete each line of the song with their own feelings about the first day of class. Add a tune and perform in front of the class.

“First Days” Activity 2: Write a paragraph on what you did on the holidays. (The ineffectiveness of a recount on the first day is problematised). This is remodelled more effectively in the following activity.

“First Days” Activity 3: Read “Olivia Saves the Circus” which is about a make-believe holiday. Students to write a paragraph about a holiday they wish they could have taken. Model a lotus diagram to support writing.

“First Days” Activity 4: Learning Monster. Firstly you need to make a name monster. This is done by folding a piece of paper in half and writing your name in big letters along the fold. Discuss names – where did you get your name from? What is special about your name? What do you like or dislike about your name? How do we use names?

1. Place a bubble around your name.
2. Cut this shape out. This becomes your monster.
3. Decorate your monster.
4. Tell a story about your monster by completing the following.
   My monster learns best when...
   My monster doesn’t learn if...
   My monster likes to learn about...
   My monster is looking forward to...

“First Days” Activity 5: Read the first chapter of “Staying Alive in Year 5”. Based on this chapter, lead a discussion about the students and teachers in the book. Students cut out an outline of their bodies on large paper. Split the body in half. On one side of the body list what makes a good student, on the other side of the body list what makes a good teacher? Collate results and form a code of conduct for the class.
Appendix B: Challenging through Scenario – Sample of Role Plays and Scripts

Sample Role Plays:

One of your year 5 students has just been diagnosed as ADHD. She found it difficult to cope with year 4. She yelled out constantly in class and was disruptive. Since being diagnosed she thinks she is special and doesn’t have to do the same task as the rest of the class. You ask the students to write about their learning monsters and even before attempting the task she informs you “I can’t do this”. How do you react?

Geoff was a student who has the reputation for being disruptive and funny and you have been trying to engage him in meaningful ways. While completing his learning monster he seems involved and engaged in the activity. You ask him if at share time he would like to share his monster. When it comes to Geoff’s turn to share the class erupts into laughter as he has drawn a penis on the monster. How do you react?

After setting the task of cutting out the learning monster, a group starts arguing over sharing materials. You go to the group and a student informs you that “Sophie snatched the scissors from me”. Sophie replies “did not and you can’t prove it anyway”. How do you react?

After school you are putting the students’ work on display on the entrance of the classroom. Another teacher walks pasts and says “No one else in the grade 3 area did this, are you doing your own curriculum?” How do you react?

Sample Script:

Parent: We have a problem with the activity something about monsters that you made the class do?
Teacher: Really? What kind of problem?
Parent: We think it’s not appropriate for children to be thinking about monsters.
Teacher: Why is that?
Parent: Well, the language, for one thing.
Teacher: Did your child say she was scared because of the activity?
Parent: She didn’t have to. And I know I speak for a lot of parents who aren’t happy about the choice but just don’t have the courage to say anything.
Teacher: No one’s ever complained before.
Parent: Like I said, people are afraid. I’m concerned not just for my child, but for everyone’s child. Nobody should be subjected to an activity like this.